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# **Student Participation in Institutional Governance in South African Universities: A case of the University of Cape Town**

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**In the Sociology Department**

**Faculty of Humanities**

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**February 2013**

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## **COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work, each significant contribution to, and quotation, in this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people have been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: Sithabile Mbambo

Date: 11 February 2013

University of Cape Town

## **DEDICATION**

My First and foremost thanks to the Almighty God for seeing me throughout this journey and affording me the opportunity to attain a Masters degree.

I dedicate this thesis to my brother Thembikhosi and his wife Cheneso who provided me with all the financial support.

University of Cape Town

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## ABSTRACT

The inclusion and participation of students within institutional governance is a prerequisite for the democratisation of Higher Education Institutions. In the context of South Africa the new cooperative governance model advocates for broad participatory forms of democracy in the governance of higher education institutions. Along these lines of thinking the South African Government's Education White Paper 3 of 1997 states that students and all other "stakeholders" should participate in "participatory", "representative" and "democratic" forms of governance in higher education institutions. Literature, for example Cele (2002), suggests that student participation in the governance of higher education institutions in South Africa is limited. This study examined the extent to which students actually participate in Senate, the highest academic decision-making body at the University of Cape Town. My analytical framework used Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation. I adopted a case study approach and multiple data collection methods which included documentary research, observation and in-depth interviews with a sample of the role-players from Senate. The qualitative data analysis was informed by the Miles and Huberman's approach. The main research finding is that participation within Senate is consistent with what Arnstein calls the level of Placation, which is more than Consultation but less than Partnership. If the students' level of participation in the university's highest academic decision-making body were to take the form of Partnership (with the other role-players) the principle of democratisation advocated within the White Paper would be achieved. The study also showed the existence of unequal levels of influence among various role players in Senate, with the more powerful role-players being executive and academic managers followed by university professors. Arnstein would classify student participation as tokenism, because the six student representatives form a very small minority of the 342 members of Senate, they are not in themselves influential and therefore they have limited influence over the decisions made by Senate. The success of any "demands" they might have is dependent on support from powerful role-players in Senate. Broadly my findings are consistent with the findings of other related studies (Sanseviro: 2007; Wood: 1993; Menon, 2005; Cele: 2002).

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSG	Commission on Student Governance
DoE	Department of Education
DVC	Deputy Vice Chancellor
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HOD	Head of Departments
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
ODG	Organisational Design and Governance Report
SRC	Student Representative Council
UCT	University of Cape Town
VC	Vice Chancellor

University of Cape Town

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

The purpose of the study was to assess the level of participation by student representatives within Senate at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Post-apartheid policy reforms within higher education have largely sought to democratise higher education institutions so that they could reflect the new democratic dispensation (Department of Education (DoE) White Paper, 1997; National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE), 1996). In addition, the reforms sought to restructure these institutions so that they could become more adaptable, relevant and competitive to global and local demands (White Paper, 1997). This gave birth to the new co-operative governance model. The motivation for this study emerged from an interest in investigating the extent to which the University had implemented the new governance approach in relation to student participation.

The adoption of the new co-operative governance model was aimed at redressing the inequities within the education system that had been created under Apartheid, when educational institutions were racially segregated (Bunting, 2002; NCHE, 1996:29). Furthermore, the apartheid policies promoted a relationship between the state and higher educational institutions (HEI), and within HEIs, a model of internal governance, which was top-down, centralised, undemocratic and non-inclusive (NCHE, 1996). The co-operative governance approach was enacted in terms of the White Paper 3 on Higher Education (1997)<sup>1</sup>. The White Paper prescribed a system of governance, which was “democratic, representative, participatory and characterised by mutual respect, tolerance and the maintenance of a well-ordered and peaceful community life” (White Paper, 1997: 1.19). In essence, the approach advocated greater “co-operation and partnerships” between the state and HEI, and between internal constituents of HEIs and civil society (NCHE, 1996: 7-8). Therefore, central to the new approach was the belief that those who were “affected by decisions [, should] have a say in making them, either directly or through elected

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<sup>1</sup>The Education White Paper 3 of 1997 was informed by proposals made by the National Commission of Higher Education which had been established in 1996. The Commission was tasked with formulating recommendations on the governance of Higher Education Institutions (HEI).see White paper 1997 forward; Hall et al 2002: 13). This will be referred to as the ‘White Paper (1997)’ from now on.

representatives" (White Paper, 1997: 1.19). This was meant to ensure greater accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making in the governance of HEIs.

Other major tenets of the new model, which are of interest to the study, were that "no single actor or agency [should] claim sole responsibility or authority for determining the policies and priorities of the higher education system" (NCHE, 1996: 179). In addition, "competing and complimentary interests, interdependence and common goals must be recognised" in decision-making (NCHE, 1996: 179).

Consequently, the implication of this policy position by the Department of Education (DoE) regarding the role of students in higher education was that they were regarded as major "stakeholders" and "partners" in higher education (NCHE, 1996: 178). In relation to this study, the latter illustration would entail joint decision-making among various groups in forums such as Senate within the University. Subsequently, the enactment of the Higher Education Act of 101<sup>2</sup> 1997 saw the formalisation of student participation within the major decision-making bodies namely Council, Senate and Institutional Forums in historically black universities (Koen et al., 2006: 406). The historically English speaking universities, such as UCT, University of the Witwatersrand and Rhodes University, which already had some kind of student participation; here the scope of student participation was increased.

The new approach to institutional governance forms the background of this study. The aim of which is to determine how UCT has interpreted the co-operative governance model and consequently to what extent has participatory and democratic decision-making operated within the Senate. A preliminary analysis of the key decision-making bodies at the UCT, viz. the Council and Senate, was undertaken, which revealed that only two students sat on the Council, while the Senate had six student representatives. Based on this, it is evident that an evaluation of perceptions of student representatives in Senate could present more diverse and varied views than would a study of the two students on the Council. In addition, the core functions of Senate, which are academic affairs, are central to the student body. The Senate

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<sup>2</sup>The Higher Education Act provided the governance structures for the new approach (Hall et al., 2002).

was, therefore, selected as the appropriate focus of research into the level of student participation at an HEI.

This study takes cognisance of the fact that, there might be a disjunction between policy position of DoE and actual practice, for the study is situated within a currently unfolding debate on the limitations faced by the government in its bid to democratise public institutions and make decision-making more inclusive. Parallel experiences could also be drawn from the public sector where policy reforms have not yielded the desired outcomes (Bardill, 2000). A long standing criticism of the process of democratisation in South Africa is that, though policies use the language of participatory democracy, they are vague and do not map clear guidelines on how institutions should become more democratic. Institutions such as universities may adopt the democratic rhetoric of the White Paper but they are not obligated to implement its spirit.

To assist in assessing the level of participation within Senate, this thesis adopts Arnstein's Ladder of Participation Framework (1969). The framework provides an understanding of participation, and a critical yardstick with which to measure participation. An evaluation of perceptions held by the various role players<sup>3</sup> together with evidence from an analysis of certain documents will assist in determining whether the level of participation is at the informing level, the consultation level, the placation level or the partnership level<sup>4</sup>.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The inclusion of students within the main decision-making bodies of HEIs, namely Council and Senate, is mandatory. Therefore, the practice of student participation in institutional governance has become widespread, as it is a prerequisite for the democratic governance of HEIs. The University of Cape Town (UCT) evidently subscribes to this understanding, as it is outlined in its Institutional Statute Act (2012), University Publications and University Private Act (1999). UCT goes further, it professes its commitment to the new approach to co-

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<sup>3</sup>The sample used in this study is composed of executive managers, academic managers, senior managers, professors and students.

<sup>4</sup>Arnstein's ladder of participation framework and its constituent levels are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

operative governance by ensuring that “there is no decision that can be taken without the student voice”<sup>5</sup> (UCT official website). This study examines what such statements mean in practice.

A variety of studies reveal that the practice of student participation in institutional governance is widespread within European public universities (Perrson, 2003; Bergan, 2003; Bergan, 2004; Boland, 2005), North America (Zuo, 1995; Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999), and in African universities (Luescher, 2005: 33). However, the evidence from the literature reviewed indicates that the implementation of meaningful student participation is problematic (Sanseviro, 2007; Wood, 1993 and Menon, 2005). Often disparities exist between the rhetoric within the official university documents and actual student participation. This raises the question of why it is necessary to have meaningful participation. Luescher (2005: 34) suggests that the rationale for meaningful student participation is located within the idea of democratic governance of institutions. Meaningful participation according to this suggestion is warranted because democracy brings into play the notion of “demos”<sup>6</sup> and “self-determination”<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, “in this sense, decisions concerning the core functions of the university ought to be resolved in deliberations between academic staff and students [and administrators] as a matter of co-determination at the level at which they arise” (Luescher, 2005: 34).

In spite of the need for meaningful participation as part of the democratic governance of HEIs, this has been problematic as indicated by scholars cited above. For instance, Institutional Statutes can state the ideal but this may be different from what is actually practised. Consequently reported levels on the impact and influence of student participation in decision-making are often limited to moderate (Wood, 1993), tokenistic, co-option and limited to non-substantial issues (Sanseviro, 2007). Sifuna’s (1997) study to investigate the causes of student unrest in Kenyan universities supports the above assertion. The study revealed that contrary to institutional statutes, decision-making continues to be done in a “top-down” manner (cited in Obondo, 2000: 7).

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<sup>5</sup> UCT official website, <http://www.uct.ac.za/students/src>.

<sup>6</sup> Demos refers to those directly involved (Luescher, 2005: 34).

<sup>7</sup> The principle of self determination regarding any issue dictates that those involved should be part of any legitimate solution (Luescher, 2005: 34).

Arising from this, the study assessed how the concept of student participation had been applied at the University of Cape Town, with specific reference to the University Senate, which is the highest academic decision-making body at UCT. Measurement the levels of participation will enable the researcher to establish whether the students are included merely because it is a statutory requirement or if they are active partners in decision-making.

### **1.3 Central research question:**

Stemming from the above discussion the central research question was;

*To what extent do student representatives participate in Senate, one of the main decision-making bodies of the University of Cape Town?*

### **1.4 General Objectives**

The study assessed the extent to which student representatives participate in institutional governance at UCT, and, in particular, the Senate. Participation was measured against a modified version of Arstein's ladder of participation. The model conceptualised participation in terms of four broad indicators or levels, namely Informing, Consulting, Placation or Partnership.

### **1.5 Rationale of the study**

The study is situated within the broad debate about the problems associated with the democratisation of public institutions. The legislation, on which the policy of co-operative governance is based, does not provide concrete guidelines on how co-operative governance is to be attained. This vagueness is apparent in Section 35 of the Higher Education Act 101 (1997). The Higher Education Act does not clearly define the role and responsibilities of the various stakeholders in various decision-making structures, for example, Senate (Cloete and Bunting, 2000:50). Although the Act does provide for the establishment of student representative councils, it does not define their role or the extent of their participation. The Act leaves this to the discretion of individual institutions. Potentially, the administrators have the power to limit student involvement, right from the start. They may only allow non-

threatening forms of participation, in order to maintain unequal power relations. Cornwall (2008: 275) mentions that “Invited spaces” provided by those in power, either because of “statutory obligations [,] or [through] their own initiative [,] - are often structured and owned by those who provide them, no matter how participatory they may seek to be”. Such arrangements, therefore, tend to perpetuate the status quo. Consequently, it is important to investigate how the Higher Education Act 101 (1997) Section 35 has been interpreted and applied at UCT.

The study of student participation in university governance in the South Africa can be described as “hybrid”. In this context, co-operative governance combines two seemingly conflicting principles, namely “democratisation<sup>8</sup>”, on the one hand, and on the other, modern business practices which have been described as “managerialism<sup>9</sup>” (Luescher, 2008; Cloete and Kulati, 2003: viii). Democratisation derives from the imperative for governance to be more inclusive, while managerialism, which stresses efficiency and profitability, is derived from the ideology of the neo-liberal marketers. The tension or contradiction in the locus of decision-making cannot but influence the parameters which determine the nature and degree of student participation. Democratisation and participatory decision-making emphasise a bottom-up, consultative approach, which seeks to include all stakeholders, while managerialism seeks to promote a top-down approach, where the final say rests with management (Luescher, 2008). A scenario in which decision-making is the prerogative of line managers because they are considered the experts offers few opportunities for shared decision-making.

This study has sought to fill a gap in the literature on student participation in institutional governance and decision-making within the HE sector in post-apartheid South Africa. The existing literature is largely devoted to learner participation at the secondary level (Phaswana, 2010; Nongubo, 2004). These studies have explored the various challenges to, and extent of,

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<sup>8</sup>Democratisation is defined as “a reconstitution of internal decision-making in universities with reference to democratic principles, inter alia, by making decision-making processes in universities more representative of internal constituents such as students” (Luescher, 2008:2).

<sup>9</sup>Managerialism is defined as a “set of beliefs of an ideology that legitimises the authority of university executives as professional managers; it involves, and is typically described in terms of, the application of leadership styles and management approaches developed in the business world in the context of university governance” (Luescher, 2008: 2).

learner participation in school governing bodies. Studies of African tertiary institutions have tended to focus on student activism rather than on formally established modes of student participation (Luescher, 2005:6). Because, globally, there is very little literature on this topic (Sanseviro, 2007: 21; Zuo, 1995:1), and there is even less on the situation in Africa (Luescher 2005:6); this study seeks to promote the debate about formal student participation, despite the fact that it is a single case study. Lastly, given the fact that it is several years since the co-operative governance model was promulgated in the Education White Paper of (1997) and Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, it would be of interest to see how this has been executed at a specific university.

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

This research project focuses on the participation of student representatives in the institutional governance at UCT, with a specific focus on the Senate. The student governance model at the UCT is aligned to the Higher Education Act of (1997) and the Institutions Statute Act amended in 2011. This model permits students to voice their concerns and state their views in the university's decision-making bodies, and provides student leadership and support for student activities (Commission on Student Governance (CSG), 1997).

Student governance<sup>10</sup> at UCT is enacted through the Student Representative Council (SRC) which is the highest decision-making student body. The SRC consists of seventeen elected members who serve a one-year term in office. The SRC nominates students representatives to serve at institutional level in Council, Senate and Institutional forum. The student assembly, also known as the Student Parliament, "serves as an advisory body for the SRC on policy matters"<sup>11</sup>.

Furthermore, student representation extends to various domains and areas of interests or concern to students. In academic affairs, class representatives represent students at class level; and at faculty level, students have representatives on the undergraduate and

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<sup>10</sup>Student governance refers to structures that allow students to participate in decision-making at the institution.

<sup>11</sup> The information cited in this section was obtained from the UCT official website.<http://www.uct.ac.za/about/governance/studentgov/> as at 1 January 2012



postgraduate faculty councils. There is student representation on house committees, which deal with residence issues. Students make up club and societies councils, which deal with extracurricular activities. However, as stated earlier, the scope of this study is the participation at the institutional level of student representatives, specifically the Senate. The Senate is the highest academic decision-making body of the University, and is responsible for academic and research affairs (UCT Institutional Statute, 2012). The Senate has 342<sup>12</sup> members which include the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice Chancellors, academic and non-academic staff, and student representatives.

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<sup>12</sup>[www.uct.ac.za/about/governance/senate](http://www.uct.ac.za/about/governance/senate).

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

### ***Theoretical Perspectives***

#### **2.1 Participation**

The central research question aims to assess the extent to which student representatives participate in the Senate, the highest academic decision-making body of the University of Cape Town. It is important to define the key concepts of the central research question, which are participation, and more specifically, student participation. This section will also evaluate the theories of participatory democratic theory and stakeholder political theory and how they relate to the principle of democratisation promoted by co-operative governance.

##### **2.1.1 Participation broadly defined**

The concept of participation seems to have become little more than a catchword because it has been applied so widely, for example, in development studies, education and policy administration. Despite its adoption by many disciplines and subjects, the assumptions underlying its use are similar, namely, the involvement of key stakeholders in decision-making, either directly or through representatives, improves the transparency, accountability, democracy and efficiency of public institutions and community programmes.

Participation broadly defined “is a political process in which previously excluded classes or groups seek to become involved, have a voice in and generally gain access to the benefits of economic and social development” (Oakley, 1995: 3). Oakley’s definition illustrates the presumption that participation should be transformative, that is, it is a process in which previously marginalised groups, in this case students, are included in the decision-making process in order to ensure that their needs are satisfied. The rationale supporting public participation has influenced the adoption of a new co-operative governance model in Higher Education, a model which advocates that the governance of HEIs must be shared by the various constituencies, students included.

### 2.1.2 Conceptual problems with the concept of Participation

Because the term is broad by nature, vague, multifaceted and multidimensional, the absence of a universally accepted definition of participation renders the concept problematic. As a result, activities defined as participatory vary in scope, degree and intensity. This is also apparent in the case of student participation. The many interpretations of student participation found in education literature, range from the idea of simply taking part in activities but having little influence, to being provided with a platform to voice concerns or views, and ultimately, to sharing in the formulation and implementation of education policies and practice (Holdsworth, 1996:26).

Therefore, student participation in academic and organisational governance can be passive in form: students are involved because this is a statutory requirement, yet they are denied decision-making authority. In this case, their involvement is merely “ritualistic”, “tokenism” and superficial, because the intention and motivation of university authorities is just to give the appearance of including them. Sansverio’s (2007) study of student leaders’ perceptions of institutional governance provides examples of passive forms of participation; though students were invited into some of the main decision-making bodies of the institution they were denied voting rights. This meant that they were unable to influence or take part in actual process of decision-making. Consequentially, their role in these bodies was in practice that of an observer.

Student participation may be viewed as a co-option process, students are present, but the decisions have already been made by others, (Mason, 1978: 310 cited in Luescher, 2008: 22). Students merely “rubber stamp” decisions; they have had very little or no influence in determining the outcome. Complete authority remains vested in the hands of those in power. According to Cele (2002: 2) this leads to “substantial frustration” when the involved “parties are uncomfortable with [the] outcomes”.

The preceding discussion outlines two situations which have been described as “participation”, but where students have little or no power. Clearly, not all forms of participation are transformative, that is, they produce changes in the power relations

between students and university/school authorities. This raises the question of what constitutes meaningful participation.

### **2.1.3 Meaningful Student Participation**

Student participation is meaningful when it empowers students so that, they can influence or propose education policies and practices (Holdsworth, 1996: 26). Active participation denotes a type of participation where students can make a significant contribution when decisions are being taken about issues that are of vital concern or importance to them (Holdsworth, 1996). Active participation ensures that there is a greater probability that their educational needs will be satisfied.

Wilson (2000:26) refers to meaningful student participation as “deep participation”. Attributes of this form of participation is that students perceive it to be valuable. Not only are they given a voice and a platform where they can state their ideas and opinions, but their ideas carry weight (Wilson, 2000). This practice is based on the premise that if students are given a place to voice their concerns, in turn, they will allow the other side to present its case, and there can be discussion. Students value meaningful participation not just because it gives them a voice and is empowering, but it also brings greater benefits because the outcome is likely to meet their needs (Wilson, 2000).

### **2.1.4 Justification for student participation**

The extent to which students participate, or are allowed to participate, will be determined by the value attached to their participation. The literature was explored to establish the rationale for student participation. Many arguments were presented. These can be categorised as follows: “political-realist”, “legalist”, “consumerist”, “communitarian” and “democratic and consequential” (Luescher, 2012: 5-11; Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999). Luescher (2012:1) suggests that these arguments can be seen as complementary, and when viewed together provide an analytical framework and rationale for evaluating students participation in various domains within the university.

Proponents of the political-realist view regard students as “internal stakeholders” who are also “a politically significant constituency of the university” (Luescher, 2012: 5). Their exclusion has had detrimental impacts on university operations when students have gone on strike. Studies of students’ uprisings have pointed to the exclusion of students from decision-making procedures and forums as a major factor contributing to student strikes and uprisings (Obondo, 2000). “Student participation in decision-making plays a [positive role] in the creation of an atmosphere of openness and trust in universities, leading to positive organisational climate” (Menon, 2005: 169).

The legalist view is rooted in the understanding that “there is no longer a need to make a case for the formal inclusion of students in university governance because this is legally provided for” (Luescher, 2012: 6). Scholars such as Zuo and Ratsoy (1999:9) justify student participation on the basis that it is provided for at institutional level within institutional statutes and by national legislation. However, this legalist argument is weakened by the fact the legal provision for student participation at departmental and faculty is limited (Bergan, 2004).

Proponents of the “consumerist case” perceive students as “clients” and “consumers of higher education” (Luescher, 2012: 6). McGrath (1970), argues “that as, ‘consumers’ of higher education, students are entitled” to determine the provision of the service (see Menon, 2005: 169). However, Bergan (2004: 23-24) points out a weakness in this argument: if student are to be perceived as consumers their role is limited, for they can only be concerned with the nature of the service and not management of the institution.

Proponents of the “communitarian view”, such as Wolff (1969) and Bergan (2004: 23-24) are of the opinion that students should be able to participate because they are “members of the university community” (Luescher, 2012:8). Students are members of the “community of learning” (Wolff, 1992: 127), and, therefore, have as much right to participate in decision-making as other constituents.

Finally, there is the “democratic and consequentialist view”. This argument takes a societal perspective on the consequences and benefits deriving from students’ participation in university decision-making. This perspective sees universities as having a socialising role,

namely, to offer an environment which enables and fosters democratic values within the student body (Luescher, 2012: 9-10). This role is imperative if a democratic society is to be sustained and perpetuated (White Paper, 1997). This argument focuses on the individual and organisational benefits derived from student participation, as does the previous view.

Counter arguments against student participation highlight the challenges and impracticability of allowing students to participate in the various domains of institutional governance. The World Bank (2000) suggests that with regard to institutional governance, student participation should be limited to areas such as student affairs, because it is necessary that students themselves speak of their difficulties and what they see as the weaknesses of the institution. The principle of participation should be based on expertise and competence (Miles et al., 2008). Students are temporary members of the university community (Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999). Their decisions may be short-sighted, because they are motivated to satisfy their present needs, and may not take into consideration the long term outcomes of those decisions.

#### **2.1.5 Participatory decision-making and democracy**

The following section assesses the relationship between democracy and participation. It also explains what is implied by broad forms of democracy which allow for full participation of people in decision making processes.

##### **2.1.5.1 Participatory Democratic Theory**

The principles of co-operative governance, which advocate participatory decision-making, co-operation and partnerships, can be related to the central tenets of participatory democratic theory. Proponents of this theory, such as Pateman (1970), and Hilmer (2010), believe that citizens, who are active participants in democratic decision-making in every sector of society, promote and consolidate democratic practices and values throughout a political system. The theory of “participatory democratic theory envisions the maximum participation of citizens in their self-governance, especially in sectors of society beyond those that are traditionally

understood to be political (for example, the household and workplace)” (Hilmer, 2010:43). In the light of this definition, it is clear that democracy is fostered when citizens’ involvement encompasses all spheres of society, not just the political sphere.

Barber (1984) refers to participatory democracy as “strong democracy”, because participatory institutions bring together citizens, who though they may have conflicting interests, are willing to discuss and debate issues, in order to arrive at decisions which are in the best interest of the community at large. This understanding is similar to that envisaged by document makers who formulated the White Paper 3 of 1997. The Department of Education wanted to create environments within HEIs, which would allow the different constituencies, despite their having conflicting and competing interests, to set up mechanisms for effective and transparent decision-making.

The conventional liberal democratic theorists, for example, Schumpeter (1950) and others, is to view democracy as citizens participating by voting to select leaders who are to be responsible for policy making. This model of democracy has citizens relinquishing the task of policy making and governance to politicians, who are perceived as most knowledgeable and experienced in policy making.

In participatory democracy citizens have direct ownership of the decision-making processes relating to policy matters and the administration of the state. As a result, citizens’ role is transformed from a passive to an active one. Central to this theory is the assumption that participation in decision-making has “educational and self-improving values” (Budge, 1996: 10).

Hilmer (2010: 56) sums the central tenants of participatory democratic theory as follows;

- frequent participation in self-governance increases citizens’ sense of political efficacy and empowerment;
- the frequent participation in self-government produces a more politically astute citizenry;

- the expansion of democratic participation into traditionally non-participatory sectors of society tends to break the monopoly of state power and engender a more equitable and humane society.

The following section explains the above assumptions and assesses how they relate to this study. The first assumption implies that self-governance is empowering, and increases an individual's "sense of efficaciousness and empowerment" (Hilmer, 2010: 57). The psychological benefit of citizen self-governance is political efficacy citizens have self confidence in their ability to effect change (Pateman, 1970).

The relevance of the first assumption: though the competencies and limited experience of students have frequently been seen as an obstacle to their effective participation in institutional governance, over time these competencies can be developed and improved through continued participation. Pateman (1970: 105) sums up the educative role of participation: "we learn to participate by participating [,] ... feelings of political efficacy are more likely to be developed in a participatory environment".

The second assumption: "citizens' political astuteness increases the more often they participate in their self-government" within participatory institutions (Hilmer, 2010:58). The more often citizens participate in institutions which directly affect their lives, the more likely they are to acquire the skills and practices necessary to being effective citizens within the broader society. Central idea is that "citizens learn by doing" (Hilmer, 2010: 59).

In relation to student participation:

First, students need to learn how democracy works - through participation in student organisations and university decision-making bodies, and by developing a conceptual understanding of democracy. Second, they need to learn that democracy works by experiencing that they can influence events and their own living conditions through participation (Bleikle cited in Luescher et al., 2011: 10).



The suggestion that the opportunities be given to students through such processes as voting for SRC members, and by deliberating over matters within university administrative bodies, allows them to develop skills and values necessary to become more politically astute citizens, is of central importance considering that universities are viewed as having the vital task of educating an active and critical citizenry (White Paper, 1997: 1.3).

The final assumption: that increased participation by citizens subverts the state's monopoly on power, consequently "a more equitable and humane society" is likely to be the result (Hilmer, 2010:60). Hilmer (2010) defines equitable as implying non-discrimination and equality of all citizens, while humane implies "regarding a human being as an end [,] and never merely as a means to some other end" (Hilmer, 2010:60). Such a society is possible because policy outcomes result from collective effort, and reflect the interests and contributions of all citizens. Participation educates the individual to realise that his or her interests are intertwined with the interests of the larger community (Pateman, 1970). Citizens are motivated to be more constructive during deliberations because they strive to make decisions which promote the common good of the community.

By including all constituencies within HEIs in the decision-making processes, these institutions have a greater opportunity of becoming more democratic than they have been in the past. In addition, a participatory form of governance allows students to watch dog administrators and academic staff members; therefore, ensuring that educational policies and decisions made are reflective of the interests of their constituency.

The above discussion shows how the theory of participatory democracy can be connected to the principle of democratisation and values espoused within the White Paper of 1997, which presented a model of co-operative governance which would democratise the policy processes and administration of HEIs, and as consequence, promote democratic values within the wider

society. Student participation in university decision-making is seen as central to the democratisation of universities.

#### **2.1.5.2 Stakeholder Political Theory**

An article by Morrow (1998) on stakeholder participation in the HEIs in South Africa, while not clearly referenced, provided a valuable source for the study. Morrow (1998) notes that in the late 1990s the South African government's thinking about how best to transform higher education institutions was influenced by the Stakeholder Political Theory and reflected in subsequent policy documents and legislation. The Stakeholder Political Theory echoes some of the major tenets of the participatory democratic theory.

Central to Stakeholder Political Theory is the notion that modern societies and institutions are formed by conflicting groups that have diametrically opposed interests (ibid). These groups are known as "stakeholders" or "interest groups" (ibid). The theory is viewed as democratic in the sense that it is opposed to a single group being able to decide for the entire institution which is made up of multiple stakeholders. It is based on the thinking that interest groups should freely be formed by members of an organisation/institution so that people can articulate their own interests as collectives (ibid). In addition, the theory assumes that there isn't a hierarchical relationship between the interest groups that would give one group greater power or influence in the decision-making processes of the institution (ibid). Each group has equal say and weight in decision-making processes. Where there is conflict between the various interest groups then dialogue would be employed to resolve it and each group would make some concessions (ibid). The theory acknowledges that in some instances the groups' interests will coincide (ibid).

Morrow (1998) indicates that the Broad Transformation Forums in South African Universities, which had equal representation of the various stakeholders, came about as a result of this theory. He adds the appeal of this theory in the context of South Africa was an attempt to

democratise the previously rigid and elitist system of governance within society's institutions (ibid). However, Morrow (ibid) is very critical of the applicability of the Stakeholder Political Theory in South African universities. He highlights various shortcomings of this theory in the context of universities which will be dealt with later in the discussion chapter.

## **2.2 Analytical Framework**

### **2.2.1 Ladder of citizen participation framework**

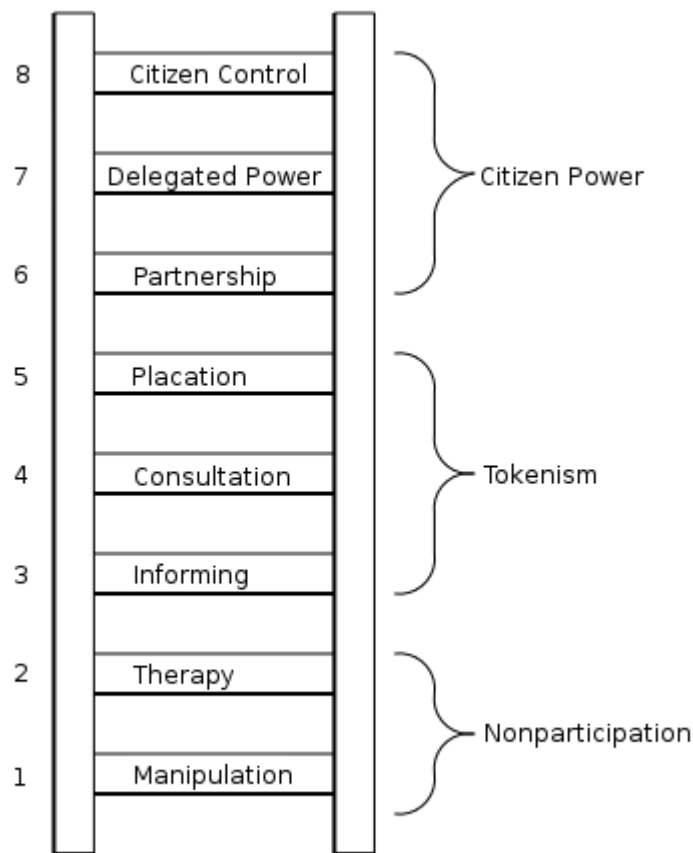
This study uses Arnstein's the Ladder of Citizen Participation Framework as an analytical approach. The ladder of citizen participation framework categorises the different forms of participation in terms of the different rungs of a ladder. The bottom rungs represent low or little impact and influence on decision-making, while the higher levels indicate greater influence and impact on decision-making. As mentioned above, each level of participation has a distinguishing aim, and the degree of participation intensifies as one moves up the ladder. This approach consequently provides a useful tool with which to measure the degree of student participation in the highest academic decision-making body at the University of Cape Town.

A number of scholars, namely Pretty et al (1995<sup>13</sup>) (in Theron, 2009:116-117 ), Oakley and Marsden in (Theron, 2009: 117) and Wilcox (1994), have developed models of public participation frameworks with differing numbers of rungs and different activities associated with each rung. Arnstein's original framework informs all of these models.

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<sup>13</sup> The seven levels are passive participation; participation in information giving; participation by consultation; participation for material incentives; functional participation; interactive participation and self-mobilisation.

**Figure 1: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation Model**



Adopted from: [www.lithgow-schmidt.dk](http://www.lithgow-schmidt.dk)

Wilcox's (1994) model of participation has five levels<sup>14</sup>. He also adds two dimensions to his model. He states that it is important to investigate the stage at which participation is taking place, as not all forms are appropriate for all situations or stages; also it is necessary at each stage to investigate the stakeholders' interest, as not all of them will have the same aspirations or intentions for participation. Wilcox's model was rejected because it does not provide detailed descriptions of the levels, which limits its usefulness as an analytical tool. Oakley and Marsden's (in Theron, 2009: 117) modes of public participation<sup>15</sup> was not selected for the same reason. Pretty's, Wilcox's and Oakley and Marsden's models have adapted Arnstein's model to suit them to specific contexts, such as agricultural programmes and

<sup>14</sup>The five levels are information; consultation; deciding together (substantial participation); acting together (substantial participation) and supporting independent community initiatives (substantial participation).

<sup>15</sup>Oakley and Marsden's (in Theron, 2009: 117) modes of public participation include anti-participatory mode; manipulation mode; incremental mode and authentic public participation

community development projects. None of these contexts are applicable to a study focusing on student participation.

Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation was adopted for the following reason: though Pretty et al's (1995) and the other typologies of participation have levels similar to Arnstein's, those models were rejected because they were tailored to assessing levels of participation in specific contexts, for example, Pretty et al (1995)'s Level four, "participation for material incentives", is not appropriate for a study of HEIs. Arnstein's model, which presents a general overview of participation, could be applied to such a study.

Moreover, previous studies of student participation in the classroom and at the institutional level have used Arnstein's model as an analytical framework. For example, Bartley et al (2010: 159) modified the basic model<sup>16</sup> to investigate the various degrees of student participation at classroom level. Bartley et al's research was published in 2010, which illustrates the point that Arnstein's model continues to provide a useful guide in the evaluating participatory practices, even within an educational institution.

Additionally, studies by Sanveiro (2007) and Cele (2002) highlight instances where the model is not used explicitly as an analytical approach, but the scholars continue to borrow from the model in their evaluation of the levels taking place. Sanveiro (2007:1) notes that students within institutional governance "often play an advisory role,[or] are simply placated". While, Cele (2002: 1) refers to various forms of participation as "no voice, right to information, right to be heard/provide advice, voting power and shared responsibility for the decision taken", which are similar to Arnstein's levels one to six (see figure 1).

Arnstein (1969) reiterates that the model can be applied to any setting, including educational ones, where meaningful participation can only be obtained after power has been redistributed to the less powerful groups, such as students. In these contexts, "'nobodies'... are trying to become 'somebodies' with enough power to make the target institutions responsive to their views, aspirations and needs", (Arnstein cited in Tritter and McCallum,

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<sup>16</sup>Bartley et al (2010:159) modified the model to include "manipulation; censure; information; consultation; neutralisation; joint participation; legitimate student participation and student-controlled activities or task"

2006:157). This assertion is vital as participation without power reduces participants to mere observers.

Arnstein's model continues to be an influential analytical tool for evaluating participatory processes in various sectors (Tritter and McCallum, 2006: 156). For this reason, this study engaged with the model when developing an analytical tool to measure levels of participation. Qualitative indicators, derived from the descriptions provided by Arnstein (1969), were used to measure the phenomena under study.

This study acknowledges that this analytical framework has limitations, namely, that it fails to highlight the reasons why a particular type of participation occurs at each level (Arnstein 1969: 217). This requires a different tool. A second limitation is that the model provides a very simplistic representation of very complex phenomena (Arnstein, 1969: 217).

Some of the above limitations were experienced by the researcher during the collection of data. For example, during the conceptualisation of each level of participation it became apparent that some of the explanations provided by Arnstein (1969) regarding particular levels were duplicated in successive levels, making the conceptualisation of each individual level problematic. When describing the characteristics of the Informing level, for example, Arnstein (1969: 219) states that information moves in a one directional manner. However, she later mentions how "meetings can also be turned into vehicles for one-way communication by the simple device of providing superficial information, discouraging questions or giving irrelevant answers" (Arnstein, 1969: 219). This is a contradiction as this indicates the existence of two directional flow of information. As a result, when conceptualising the researcher had to extract and assess which indicators were most appropriate for each level. In addition, the model is premised solely on the assumption that the levels of participation are influenced primarily by power imbalances (Tritter and McCallum, 2006). It was evident from the findings that issues of power only formed part of the explanation for levels of student participation within Senate. The other reasons included the participants' lack of interest in participating or limited knowledge on the issue being discussed. The framework only enabled the researcher to establish the levels without

providing explanations for the existence of that level. As a result, the explanations gathered by the study were outcomes of individuals responding to probing questions by the researcher.

### **2.2.2 Arnstein's ladder of participation framework**

According to Arnstein (1969: 216) "citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power". Arnstein (1969) provides three broad categories of citizen power: non-participation, tokenism and citizen control. Non-participation includes the Manipulation and Therapy levels. While Informing, Consultation and Placation signify different degrees of tokenism. The levels of Partnerships, Delegated Power and Citizen Power make up the category, citizen control. The ultimate aim of citizen participation is to achieve citizen control. At this level, citizens are empowered to govern the programme or institution without the assistance of the traditional power holders (Arnstein, 1969).

### **2.2.3 Adaptation of Arnstein's model for the purposes of this study**

This study has adopted the levels of Informing, Consultation, Placation and Partnership, from Arnstein's model. The first two levels, Manipulation and Therapy, do not denote forms of participation and have, therefore, been excluded. They are not relevant to investigating the extent to which student representatives participate in the main decision-making bodies of South African Universities, namely, the Senate.

The levels of Delegated Power and Citizen Control have also been excluded. Arnstein's model culminates with the stage where citizens are able to determine the direction of the project or institution without the assistance of traditional power-holders. While this is appropriate for a community development project, it is not feasible in the context of institutional governance within the Higher Education sector. Firstly, students are not permanent members of the University. Students cannot achieve the level of citizen control, because they are temporary sojourners. Also the majority of the seats in the Senate are held by academic and non-academic staff members. As a minority in the Senate, students cannot meet the criteria for these levels. Luescher's (2008) study substantiates this preliminary assessment. Luescher

investigated the impact of managerialism on student participation at the University of Cape Town. His study revealed that students hold 2.4 % of the seats in Senate<sup>17</sup>. Such a low percentage cannot support the levels of Delegated Power and Citizen Control.

#### **2.2.4 Interpretation of the Model**

Based on the rationale provided above, the researcher adapted Arnstein's model. She selected the levels of Informing, Consultation, Placation and Partnerships. For the purpose of analysis, each level is distinct because the factors that determine each level are unique to that specific level. For example, informing involves one-way information dissemination, whereas consultation involves information moving in two directions. This example shows quite clearly that as you move up the ladder additional decision-making power is made available. Participation is incremental as participants move up the ladder; at each step up to the next rung more power is available to them. This section has outlined the selected theoretical model, and its interpretation, the next section gives a description on how each level has been conceptualised.

#### **2.2.5 Conceptualisation of the levels**

##### **2.2.5.1 Informing**

Arnstein in (Theron, 2009: 119) states that at the first level the public is informed in a "one-way, top-down [directional] flow of information ... of their rights and responsibilities and options". Examples of this type of communication include press releases, pamphlets and attitude surveys (Arnstein, 1969: 219). At this level there are no opportunities for feedback participants are only informed about what is to be discussed; they are excluded from the final decision-making process.

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<sup>17</sup>Table on Membership of University Governing bodies at UCT for 2005 (Luecsher, 2008: 261).



If student representatives are only informed about what is to be discussed, and the information comes in the form of memos, emails and agendas, they are mere recipients for they do not have the opportunity to provide feedback. This would qualify their participation as informing, because communication is one-way, from the top down. For the purposes of this study, the researcher will have to investigate whether the information flow is one directional and what form it takes. Do student representatives have access to the minutes of previous meetings, are they briefed at the beginning of meetings, or do they have access to Senate publications such as committee rulebooks?

The indicator for the level of informing is:

**Indicator A: Information is disseminated in one directional manner.**

#### **2.2.5.2 Consultation**

The essential characteristic of the consultation level is “inviting citizens’ opinions” (Arnstein, 1969: 219); however there is “no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account” (Arnstein, 1969: 219). At this level the researcher will need to determine whether the opinions of students are only solicited on issues which the Chair of Senate has introduced. At this level, the students would not have sufficient power to determine the outcome of a decision, and their opinions would not be reflected in the final decision. Information flows in a two-directional manner and there is evidence that two-way communication is taking place. However, student representatives can only give their opinions and views when invited to do so, and they are not part of the decision-making process.

The indicator for the level of consultation is:

**Indicator A: Students only give their views when they are solicited by the Chair of Senate, and relate to matters introduced by the Chair.**

### 2.2.5.3 Placation

Theron (2009: 119) notes that at the Placation level “a few handpicked members of the public are appointed to the committees”. Arnstein (1969: 217) describes this level as a “higher level of tokenism”. Arnstein (1969: 220) states that while there seems to be an increase in the degree of influence held by the public in reality, their power is largely symbolic.

Arnstein describes this form of participation as a means of silencing citizens, because they are under the illusion that they are being represented. In fact, their representatives have been relegated to a “traditional advisory role” (Arnstein, 1969: 220). The participants are allowed to make contributions, and assist in planning programmes, but the traditional “power holders [retain] the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice” (Arnstein, 1969: 220). In other words, the inclusion of the public is based on ground rules, which ensure that the traditional “power-holders” retain the main decision-making authority (Arnstein, 1969: 220). In addition, if the representatives are “not accountable to a constituency in the community and the traditional power elite hold the majority of seats, the have-nots can be easily outvoted and outfoxed” (Arnstein, 1969: 220). The researcher has assumed that student representatives are accountable to constituency. Student representatives are nominated by the SRC members, who themselves are elected by the student body.

Background research established that students had representation on Senate, which fulfils one of the criteria for Placation. This study therefore needed to establish if such representation was merely tokenism or more than tokenism, for example, by inquiring whether the student representatives had any influence within Senate. It would be important to assess whether the student representatives had the “muscle” to ensure that their input could influence the Senate’s decisions. It was therefore, necessary to provide an understanding of what would be regarded as influence. Influence may entail voting rights, which often are the basis on which decisions are made within these bodies. In addition, influence could mean the ability to sway decisions by lobbying other Senate members. If it were established that students were merely token representatives because they have very little decision-making clout, this would suggest that participation is at the Placation level. The

role of the student representatives would simply be that of advisors; other Senate members would retain the right to accept or reject the “advisors” advice. The influence of the student “advisors” would depend on the extent to which they could pressure other role players to concede to their demands.

Indicators for the level of placation are:

**Indicator A: Students are free to raise issues to be discussed in Senate.**

**Indicator B: Students have limited decision-making power to ensure that, their inputs potentially influence final decisions made.**

#### **2.2.5.4 Partnership**

The literature on partnerships reveals that the concept remains contested and no universal definition exists, despite its centrality to various government policies which view it as a desirable form of participation (Dowling, et al 2004). At this level “power becomes distributed through negotiations between the public and those in power” (Arnstein in Theron, 2009: 119). Individuals in power agree “to share planning and decision-making responsibilities through such structures as joint policy boards, planning committees and mechanisms for resolving impasses” (Arnstein, 1969: 221). For a partnership to be effective the citizens need to have some form of leverage or “bargaining influence” in order to gain their demands (Arnstein, 1969: 221-222). An example of leverage would be an “organized power-base in the community ... the citizen leaders are accountable” to (Arnstein, 1969: 221).

In order to establish that there is a partnership between students and other role players, the following indicators have to be present.

**Indicator A: Planning and decision-making responsibilities are shared between students and management.**

Firstly, students would negotiate with management for power to be shared. This could be achieved through the sharing of planning and decision-making responsibilities. This is the first indicator of partnership. This study makes use of this indicator to establish whether students

are included in all the sub-committees of Senate. All the proposals and recommendations passed by the Senate originate in these sub-committees. At this level, students would not merely ratify decisions that had been made by others which were brought before the Senate. They would be accepted as partners in making decisions about academic policies.

**Indicator B: Student representatives have an organised power base in the student body that they can call upon. Their power base in the student body gives them bargaining power in Senate.**

The second indicator is the bargaining power of the student representatives. This power comes from the student population. It gives them leverage in the Senate, but they are accountable to the student body.

**Indicator C: the Senate environment is conducive to students influencing decisions**

The third indicator of partnership is that the environment in the Senate promotes the efforts of the student representatives to successfully effect pro-student changes in university policy and practices. The study will investigate whether the decision-making procedures and practices of the Senate present obstacles to their efforts.

**Indicator D: a balance of power has been negotiated by the student representatives with the other constituencies in Senate**

In order for the fourth indicator to be present, there would have to be a redistribution of power in the Senate, negotiated by the student representatives and management. The researcher would need to collect evidence of the negotiations and of changes in the distribution of power.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### *Introductory note*

Durrheim (2006: 34) defines a research design as “a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research”. Mouton (1996:107) describes research design as the “blueprint” of a study. This section outlines the research approach, the sampling strategy, the data collection tools, the analytic strategy and ethical considerations.

### **3.1 Case study Approach**

This study uses a case study research approach. Yin (2009:18) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”.

This research project conforms to the criteria of case study research in that it has a set boundary or parameter and a unit of analysis or focus (Punch, 2005: 145). The research question narrows the focus of the study to a specific aspect of the phenomenon, and a number of sources of data and data collection methods are utilised (Punch, 2005: 145). The selection of UCT as the site of this case study was appropriate to the purpose of the study, which was to assess the level of student participation in institutional governance within HEIs in South Africa. UCT is a case study of historically liberal, English speaking universities. It has much in common with other similar universities especially Rhodes University and Wits University. UCT was chosen because I am familiar with the institution and I have access to the respondents. In order to focus the study I examined UCTs Senate rather than both Council and Senate.

### 3.2 Sampling Strategy

This study has made use of stratified purposeful sampling to identify the key informants. Stratified purposeful sampling has been defined as “samples within samples” (Patton, 2002: 240). Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to use her discretion in selecting the most appropriate respondents; her selection was based on previous literature on the topic, and her conceptualisation of the thesis (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 166). The final sample consisted of members drawn from the different constituencies or role players in Senate. (The researcher took great pains to ensure the selection was as representative as was possible) The constituencies or role players within Senate are:

- student representatives nominated by the SRC;
- Executive Managers<sup>18</sup>, namely, the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors and the Registrar;
- Senior Managers, namely, the Executive Directors;
- Academic managers namely, the Deans/ Acting Deans and Head of Departments/ Acting head of Departments (HOD);
- Non Academic staff members (Professional Administrative, Support and Service (PASS) staff;
- Professors;
- Non-Professorial academic members;

The final sample of 16 respondents consisted of all the six student representatives, five executive managers (the Vice Chancellor was excluded), one senior manager, two academic managers and two professors. The final sample consisted of a few members which the researcher gained access to and who were knowledgeable about student participation.

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<sup>18</sup> UCT refers to this constituency as Executive Officers (Interview Executive Manager, 2013). However, the study refers to them as Executive Managers as this clearly indicates that they hold managerial positions.

### **3.3 Data Collection Techniques**

A qualitative research method was used to collect data for the study, although, the researcher also included a structured (quantitative) question in the fieldwork. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to evaluate the respondents in their natural environment (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 270). In addition, this approach was valuable because it places an emphasis on an insider perspective, which allows the respondents to provide their own meaning and interpretation of their experiences without making generalisations (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 270). On the other hand, the quantitative question allowed for the researcher to incorporate a statistical measurement of respondents' perceptions of the influence wielded by the various constituencies in Senate.

#### ***Interviews***

The primary source of data used was face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key informants. The interview design was composed mainly of open-ended questions. The interview schedule was informed by a conceptualisation of each of the four levels of the ladder, namely Informing, Consultation, Placation and Partnership level which were qualified further by sub-indicators. The respondents' answers to these questions allowed the researcher to assess whether each or any of these levels was or was not operating.

The semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to give a detailed account of their perceptions and beliefs about a particular topic because the questions were open-ended (Greeff, 2005: 296). In addition, since this type of interview is flexible, it allowed the researcher to probe further when she deemed it necessary (Greeff, 2005: 296).

A structured question was used to measure each constituency's decision-making in Senate. The respondents had to rate each constituency on a scale of one to five, in the following way: 1 = No /zero influence; 2= weak influence; 3= moderate influence; 4 = strong influence; 5= All powerful.

The study also obtained background information from key informants, from the Office of the Registrar, the Department of Student Affairs, and from a former SRC member, who is now a lecturer at a local institution, and who had previously done research on student governance at UCT.

### ***Documentary/ Archival Sources***

The information derived from the interviews was supplemented by documentary and archival sources of data. This data obtained was analysed so as to provide a robust understanding of perceptions and level of participation. These documentary and archival sources included, information on the organisational structure of UCT and the Senate, the composition of committees and the number of students sitting on them, the university newspaper, university committee manuals and the Senate minutes for 2011 and 2012. In addition, the researcher also reviewed the online SRC minutes she was referred to by the SRC, Secretary General upon request of their minutes.

### ***Observation***

The study also made use of observation. The researcher attended one of the Senate meetings. My supervisor had to send a letter of request to the Vice Chancellor asking that the researcher be given permission to attend a Senate meeting. The researcher followed what Punch (2009: 154) describes as “unstructured” observation. The researcher went into the meeting without “predetermined categories and classifications” of observations (ibid, 2009:154). During the meeting the researcher made many notes of events so as to reflect on the proceedings afterwards. This process was not only insightful, but also immensely helpful during the data analysis. The utilisation of multiple sources is termed triangulation. This technique helps to ensure reliability of the data collection methods (Mouton, 1996: 156). The information derived from the interviews could be verified against evidence obtained from the analysis of the minutes. Furthermore, the reliability of data collection was increased by



ensuring the identity of the informants was kept confidential (Mouton, 1996: 157). The guarantee of anonymity would encourage them to be more forthcoming and open in their responses. The researcher also verified some of the information provided by the previous respondents without disclosing identities during the next interview. This method was helpful as some of the respondents, who had served on Senate for a long time, tended to mix up events and this method allowed the researcher to verify the information provided. For example, one Senate member mentioned an incident where students mobilised to protest changes made to the UCT teaching calendar. However, another respondent stated that the incident had occurred prior to the period under study.

### **3.3.1 Pre-Testing of Interview schedule**

A pilot study was tested on one of the student representatives and on a former UCT staff member, who had been a member of Senate, and who had been directly involved in student governance. Some changes were made to the interview schedule, for example, rewording some questions to make them more relevant to context under study. The question used to measure joint decision-making in Senate was initially: Are students involved throughout the planning, implementation and evaluations of decisions made within Senate? From the responses, it was evident that the idea of students or other Senate members being involved in implementing decisions taken in the Senate did not elicit the anticipated response. This was clearly the task of administrators and other staff members belonging to the administration. This question was replaced by a more relevant questions which asked whether students where represented on the Senate subcommittees, faculty boards and various task teams that reviewed academic policies or investigated areas of concern. In addition, questions about the functions of Senate and the role of students in Senate were removed as the information had already been obtained from background material. The process of refining the questions continued throughout the data collection process, and in some instances, follow up interviews were necessary. Some respondents were interviewed a second time in order to gather new information.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The analytical procedure was guided by Miles and Huberman's approach to qualitative analysis. Their procedure consists of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing, and verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 10-12). Issues relating to the validity and reliability of the data analysis procedure and the conclusions drawn from it, were guided by the adoption of "verification strategies and self-correcting mechanisms" as illustrated by De Wet and Erasmus (2005: 28<sup>19</sup>).

The analytical process began in the field during data collection. The researcher recorded her observations in the form of field notes while conducting the interviews. Thereafter, the semi-structured interviews, which were the primary sources of the data, were transcribed verbatim and then coded. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) coding is a process of "assigning unique labels to text which contains references to particular categories of information" (see De Wet and Erasmus, 2005: 30). Prior to beginning coding, the researcher read the transcribed interviews thoroughly, several times. This process enables a researcher to familiarise him or herself with the text and the issues at hand (De Wet and Erasmus, 2005:29). Re-reading is essential, if a researcher is to avoid "what Morse et al (2002) call 'investigator responsiveness'"; the researcher does not jump to premature conclusions which are not substantiated by the data (see De Wet and Erasmus, 2005:30).

The coding process was guided by the central research question and the conceptual framework. The first level codes are mainly descriptive and function to summarise segments of data, and for data reduction (Miles and Huberman, 1994). First level codes assign a "class of phenomena to a segment of text" (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 57). These first level codes also help a researcher to assess information and make comparisons about the contacts. The Computer Aided Software, Nvivo, was used to manage and sort the codes.

The researcher also noted her thoughts and reflections throughout the coding process. Glaser (1978) describes this memoing as a process of "theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and

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<sup>19</sup> Drawing on Morse, Barrett, Olsen and Spiers, (2002).

their relationship as they strike the analyst coding” (see Miles and Huberman, 1994: 72). This process also assisted in the creation of second level codes. Second level codes are interpretive, and are about finding relationships and trends between the first level codes. Miles and Huberman (1994: 69) state that pattern codes are “explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emerging theme, configuration or explanation” between the codes. De Wet and Erasmus (2005: 33) state that second level codes, which are a “deeper level of analysis”, allow a researcher to explore clusters and hierarchies in the information, which will help him or her in drawing out findings. In other words, this process entails finding regularities in the data (Fielding and Lee, 1998). The grouping or clustering of first level codes is carried out in order to discover patterns in the data. The coding system used in this the study provided evidence for and against the presence of that particular indicator, rather than providing evidence of an indicator being present. The analysis of the last question, which quantified the respondents’ ranking of the various constituencies in Senate, was done with the help of Excel software.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Strydom (2005: 57) define ethics as the moral principles and rules which guide research. A researcher is obliged to adhere to certain ethical guidelines or standards (ibid 2005: 57). The researcher has ensured that her study conformed to the requirements of the University Ethics Committee. Supplementary guidelines were drawn from the discussion of research ethics in Babbie and Mouton (2001) and Strydom (2005: 58-67).

Firstly, participation was purely voluntary and the respondents were provided with an option to withdraw at any time during the interview. Secondly, the researcher was obliged to fully inform them of the aims and purposes of her study, before asking them if they agreed to be interviewed. (The researcher was bound ethically to make full disclosure to the respondents and to gain their informed consent.). The respondents were able to make an informed judgement as to whether or not they wished to participate in the study. The interviews were recorded only if the respondents gave the researcher permission to do so. Thirdly, the researcher was bound to keep the identity of the respondents confidential. She gave the

respondents pseudonyms in order to maintain their anonymity. Confidential information obtained from the study was handled as such, and, when respondents requested that certain information not be disclosed to a third party, this request was honoured. The researcher transcribed the interviews herself in order to maintain confidentiality. Fourthly, the researcher ensured that no harm either physical or psychological came to the respondents during the interview. Finally, the research findings are to be used purely for academic purposes as part of the researcher's thesis.

University of Cape Town



## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results and key findings of the thesis. Different role players within the sample of respondents<sup>20</sup> provided diverse perspectives and allowed for the examination of the topic from various points of view. Consequently, this provided a detailed picture of the extent to which students participate in the Senate of the University of Cape Town. The interviewee responses<sup>21</sup> together with evidence from supplementary information sources were analysed in order to ascertain the level of participation: whether participation could be categorised as Informing, Consultation, Placation or Partnership level. Evidence to support the exclusion of the levels of Delegated Power and Citizenship Control which are part of Arnstein's model from use in this study was also provided. Below is a graphic representation of the findings of the study (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Graphic illustration of findings using a selection of Arnstein's levels of Participation**

<b>Partnership Level</b>	Not Achieved
<b>Placation Level</b>	Attained
<b>Consultation Level</b>	Attained
<b>Informing Level</b>	Attained

It was evident that the highest level of student participation in Senate was the Placation level. The findings revealed that the level of Partnership had not been reached. The following section is an outline of the evidence for the above findings.

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<sup>20</sup> The student representatives were labeled Student 1-6, and the other respondents were labeled Executive Manager 1- 5, Academic Manager 1 – 2, Professor 1 – 2 and Senior Manager 1.

<sup>21</sup>Executive manager 5, made valuable contributions on some of the questions, but could not answer quite a number of the questions, because he/she was newly appointed to UCT and a new representative on Senate. There were other instances of respondents not answering certain questions because of a lack of knowledge or experience; however, this was not often the case.

## 4.2 Informing Level

In order for participation to involve information giving the following indicator had to be present: Information is disseminated in a one directional manner. At the level of Informing students are told what is to be discussed in meetings. Information is provided in the form of an agenda. Background information and documents relating to items on the agenda accompany the agenda.

It was apparent that all members of Senate received similar information in preparation of a Senate meeting. There was evidence of a one directional flow of information before each meeting. The Registrar's Office sent the information to the members of the Senate. 14 out of the 16 respondents confirmed that the student members did receive copies of the agenda prior to a meeting either as electronic copies by email; or hard copies sent through the internal mail.

One student made the point:

Okay, if you are a member of Senate you will get the agenda, you will get a soft copy on the internet and you will get a hard copy dropped off to you. So everything that's on the agenda you will always know before the actual meeting (Student 2, 2012).

15 of the 16 respondents said that students did have access to the background information. Additional information such as minutes of previous meetings of the Senate and other documents were available on the University Intranet. Furthermore, information could be obtained directly from the Registrar's Office and from administrative officers on the different subcommittees. However, some respondents mentioned that information giving within Senate could also be interactive. Other student representatives, who sat on the various Senate sub-committees, did report back on sub-committee activities.

Five students outlined some challenges that they encountered at this level of information receiving (Interviews: Student 1-4 and 6, 2012). These included the failure to report back by student representatives who sat on various Senate subcommittees; the lack of up-to-date

procedural handbook and guide to the business of the Senate for incoming student representatives and delays in receiving the agenda. Some of the students pointed out that a lack of an induction programme contributed to the students' limitations in processing information. This is crucial as some of the issues raised in the Senate are complex and a thorough understanding of how the institution functions and familiarity with the background information regarding the matter is essential (Interviews, Student 4 and 6, 2012). One executive manager expressed concern that the students had to deal with too much information. If they experienced information overload they could miss the essentials of the issue at hand (Interview: Executive Manager 4, 2012).

Supplementary information from key informants in the Registrar's Office, and an analysis of the UCT Committee and Working Group Manual (Draft as at March 2009) revealed that the level of participation went beyond the Informing Level. There were various mechanisms for getting feedback on an agenda prior to meetings. Senate members would provide input on the minutes of a previous meeting, which would be attached to the agenda for approval and adoption at the next meeting. Participation went beyond mere information giving; there was some sort of two-directional flow of information.

#### **4.3 Consultation Level**

The indicator for the Consultation Level is this: Students can give their views on an issue, only if it is solicited by the Chair of Senate, who also sets the terms under which it is given. The research findings indicated that there were times when the student representatives were consulted on certain matters, and they were even able to take the initiative and give unsolicited feedback. 12 different role players had something more to say about this. They mentioned that sometimes the student members were consulted. Six of the 12 respondents gave instances when the students were invited to give their views on an issue under discussion (Interviews: Senior Manager 1, Executive Manager 1 and 5, Student 2, 4, 6, 2012). This happened during Senate meetings and outside meetings.

One student spoke about students' input being solicited:



The SRC was directly canvassed for its contributions on the issue (Student 6, 2012).[Referring to proposals to rule changes regarding student disciplinary tribunals].

Three executive managers and one student stated that the students' contribution to Senate business was not solely dependent on their being invited to give their input (Interviews: Executive Managers 1-3, Student 4, 2012). Being full members of Senate, they could use their own discretion on which issues to give input. One executive manager explained:

They are full members of Senate, so it's not by invitation, it's not as if they are observers, they are there by right (Executive Manager 3, 2012).

All the respondents mentioned that the student members of the Senate were free to provide feedback on any issue. They gave examples of students voicing an opinion, issuing a counter-proposal, or making an objection. Clearly participation exceeded the Level of Consultation.

#### **4.4 Placation Level**

The indicators for the Placation Level are:

- i) Students are free to raise issues for discussion by the Senate.
- ii) The students' decision-making power is limited. They cannot be sure that their inputs will influence the Senate's final decisions.

At the Level of Placation the students are not only free to comment on issues under discussion, but they can also place issues on the Senate's agenda. In addition, the students have a limited influence over the outcome of a vote.

##### **4.4.1 The students are free to raise issues for discussion by the Senate**

As shown in the previous section, one of the indicators of the Placation Level was present. It was clear that students had a voice in Senate, because they had the right to express an opinion and indicate dissent, in other words, they could convey their feelings and positions. The findings revealed that all respondents felt that there were various channels whereby

students could place issues on the agenda. These channels included writing to the Registrar; posing a question to the Chair of Senate, or to the Deputy Vice Chancellors or to the Chair of a subcommittee a few days prior to a Senate meeting and escalation of matters through the Senate subcommittees. Two executive managers recalled students placing items on the agenda in years preceding the period under study, none of the respondents could recall this happening more recently (Interviews: Executive Manager 2 and 3, 2012). One student thought that this was because there were no pressing issues that students wanted brought directly before the Senate (Interview: Student 6, 2012).

#### **4.4.2 The students lack sufficient influence to ensure that their inputs affect the Senate's final decisions**

This indicator was chosen to assess whether the students participation in Senate was, or was not, tokenism. Arnstein (1969) defines tokenism as citizens being led to believe that they have influence over a decision-making process, but, in actual fact, their influence is very limited. This level is "simply a higher level tokenism because the ground-rules allow have-nots to advise, but ... the power holders [retain] the ... right to decide" (Arnstein, 1969:217). For participation to take the form of Placation, the students would be given the means to influence decisions, in the context of the study this refers to voting rights. However, the voting rights are worth little without the support of the major role players. Though the citizens are included in the decision-making process, there is evidence that the major power holders continue to dominate decision-making.

The study findings revealed that students had Senate voting rights; 15 of the respondents confirmed this, as did university documents. The students could influence decisions made by Senate. One student observed:

You are a full Senate member. So you can vote on any issue (Student 1, 2012).

However, the students influence was limited because they had only six representatives out of a total of 342. Theoretically, therefore, the students' ability to influence decisions was based

on their ability to successfully lobby other Senate members. 15 of the respondents felt that the students' views could influence decisions made by Senate. Nine respondents qualified their remarks by pointing out that the students' ability to influence a decision was affected by a number of factors, among which were, the competencies and commitment of individual students. This suggests that a dedicated and articulate student who presented a well-structured and persuasive argument was likely to make an impact on decisions. (Interviews: Executive Manager 1, 2, 4 and 5, Student 4, Professor 1, 2012). For example one executive manager said:

Well, a student who is articulate will be listened to, and will have influences, as I said, beyond their numbers in Senate. ... and we have had one or two students who have not done their homework and [who] will speak in [the] Senate ... [then the] Senate switches off. So it entirely depends on the individual student (Executive Manager 1, 2012).

Moreover, the students' influence was also largely dependent on the nature of the issue being discussed, which suggests that they were more likely to have an influence on student related decisions (Interviews: Professor 1, Academic Manager 1, Student 3, 2012). Only one student respondent mentioned that he felt that the views students expressed did not influence decisions (Interview: Student 6, 2012). It is clear that the majority of respondents noted that student views could influence the Senate's decisions.

Furthermore, in addition, to the plenary meetings, most respondents mentioned that non-contentious issues were often decided in the Principal's Circular, which is also known as the Chair's Circular, and which is released once a month. This provides members with an opportunity either to object or suggest amendments to the recommendations before a specified date. Any of the members could do this. The above findings show that the students were included in various decision-making processes.

The researcher did investigate actual incidents where the students' input successfully changed the outcome of a vote. There was, however, little evidence that the students' input had led to whole proposals being overturned. There was evidence that whenever they formed part of a majority their influence was apparent. In addition, as was pointed out by an

executive manager and a professor, the students often complimented and supported positions already stated by other role players (Interviews: Executive Manager 2 and Professor 2, 2012). However, when their position and that of the major role players were in conflict they were unable to turn the vote in their favour. An example of this was their request to have student representation on Academic Review Panels<sup>22</sup> which was opposed by the majority of academic members of the Senate. One student observed:

It's very difficult unless the policies actually go with institutional management [executive managers], as well as the deans; in other words, when the students are not really contesting them, then we have influence (Student 1, 2012).

This sentiment was reiterated by an Academic manager:

I don't think students have power. I think we pretend they've got power but they haven't (Academic Manager 1, 2012).

The above findings were also confirmed by a cross-section of eight respondents who mentioned that they could not recall an incident where the students' input decisively turned a vote, or swayed the majority of the Senate (Interviews: Academic Manager 1-2, Executive and 5, Senior Manager 1, Professor 1, Student 1 and 6, 2012).

One Professor said:

Umm, it's hard to say over [sic] the top of my head now ... I don't recall anything where it was very powerful, the student voice. I can't think of cases where students have really managed to go against the tide and have won over Senate [;] so I think they are an important constituency then [,] but without the direct power (Professor 1, 2012).

While it was clear that students had limited decision-making power, a cross-section of seven respondents mentioned that as a result of student input, the Senate adopted amendments to certain proposals. It was interesting that some of these amendments came from the deliberations of subcommittees, that were later adopted by the Senate, for example, changes

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<sup>22</sup> The students issued a proposal for students representatives to sit on the Academic Review Panels.

to student representation on the Ethics Committees so that only postgraduate students were included; rule changes to student disciplinary procedures; the wording of the Teaching and Learning Charter documents, and the appeals procedure of the Animal Ethics Committee (Interviews: Executive Manager 3-5, Professor 1, Student 3-5, 2012). One student and an executive manager mentioned that minor amendments were made to the proposal to merge certain departments in the Humanities Faculty. These amendments were discussed in the Faculty Boards (Interviews: Student 4, 2012 and Executive Manager 1, 2013), and were eventually approved by the Senate.

The researcher has concluded that participation in the Senate was at the Placation Level. Students were in a position to place items on the Senate's agenda. However, they had a limited ability to turn a vote in their favour unless they had the support of the major role players, as the latter had the power to determine a final decision. This is evident from what happened to certain proposals placed before the Senate. Sometimes the students succeeded in getting their (small) amendments approved.

#### **4.5 Partnership Level**

The four key indicators of Partnership Level are:

- (i) Planning and decision-making responsibilities are shared between the student representatives and those of constituencies in the Senate.
- (ii) The power base of the student representatives' is the student body, which the student Senate members can use as a bargaining chip, when negotiating with other constituencies in the Senate.
- (iii) The environment in the Senate is sufficiently conducive to give the student representatives an opportunity to influence decisions.
- (iv) Within the Senate a balance of power exists between the student constituency and the other constituencies.

At this level there is evidence of joint decision-making because the student group has some bargaining power. The environment in Senate is sufficiently conducive to allow students to

influence decisions. A balance of power exists between the various constituencies represented in Senate.

#### **4.5.1 Planning and decision-making responsibilities are shared between student representatives and those of the other constituencies in Senate.**

Student representation on the Senate subcommittees was assessed. A cross-section of six respondents felt, generally speaking, that at UCT, management followed the co-operative governance framework and allowed student representatives to sit on Senate sub-committees (Interviews: Academic Manager 2, Executive Manager 1-3, 5 and Professor 1, 2012). This was challenged by one student who stated that often students were included as an afterthought. Evidence of this was that some recently established committees did not have any student representatives on them (Interview: Student 4, 2012).

14 respondents confirmed that the student representatives were involved when Faculty boards took decisions. However, 15 respondents stated that students were not represented on some Senate sub-committees. In addition, the findings revealed that there was no student representation on some of the research task teams and working groups. This information came primarily from respondents who were either chairs of subcommittees or who had recently served on one. The inclusion of students in task teams could suggest that they were directly involved in the planning done by subcommittees. A cross-section of seven respondents mentioned that the following task teams and working groups did have student representatives: the Action Plan for Teaching and Learning; Admissions Policy Review; Action Plan for the University Building and Development Committee; Postgraduate Living Expenses and Review of the UCT Calendar (Interviews: Executive Manager 1-3, 5; Student 5-6, 2012).

One professor and an executive manager mentioned that there were task teams, which had been established by Senate subcommittees which had student representatives, but did not have any student representatives on them, for example, the review of the teacher's role at UCT, which was set up by the Senate Executive Committee (Interviews: Professor 1 and Executive Manager 3, 2012). One student and an executive manager explained that students

were not represented in the working group which had been established to discuss changes in the maths scores required by prospective students who had written the national senior certificate exams of the Independent Examinations Board (Interviews: Student 5, 2012 and Executive Manager 1, 2013).

Furthermore, a cross-section of five respondents pointed out that there were some task teams or working groups, which had been established by certain Senate subcommittees, for example, the University Research Committee, which did not have student representatives (Interviews: Academic Manager 2, Executive Manager 4- 5, 2012 and Executive Manager 1, 2013). These task teams deal with the following matters: reviewing research grants for academics, facilitating interdisciplinary research, the internationalisation of research, upgrading laboratories and safety measures at UCT, the criteria for granting emeritus status to professors and the review of the UCT retirement policy.

There were a number of explanations for the exclusion of students from some of the Senate subcommittees, task teams and working groups. For example, the nature of the issues being handled, staff promotions and the allocation of research funds, staff salaries, and staff development programmes and appointments, for example, were of no interest to students (Interviews: Executive Manager 1-5, Academic Manager 2, Professor 1-2, Student 1, 6, 2012). Also the students' contributions would be of little value or relevance because they lacked the relevant expertise or specialised knowledge; and there was the question of confidentiality (Interview: Professor 2, 2012). One academic manager said that some of the committees, without student representation, were not active (Interview: Academic Manager 2, 2012). Three executive managers and an academic manager mentioned that student representatives were excluded from committees which dealt with student results, a matter of great sensitivity, because of fears that there might be breaches of confidentiality (Interviews: Executive Manager 1, 2, 4 and Academic Manager 1). An executive manager noted that task teams dealing with issues which were still being formulated, the outcome was likely to be nebulous (Interview: Executive Manager 5, 2012). One student explained that it was impractical to include student representatives on some task teams because students did not have sufficient free time (Interview: Student 1, 2012). They explained that some meetings would last a whole day.

#### **4.5.2 Student representatives on the Senate have an organised power base in the student body which they can use as a bargaining chip.**

15 respondents commented that, within the period under study, the student representatives had not mobilised the student body to reinforce their bargaining position. A student respondent mentioned the support of the Concerned Students of African Studies (CASS) which opposed the merger of the African Studies departments and certain small departments in the Humanities Faculty (Interview: Student 4, 2012). However, this mobilisation was on a small scale and was not successful as the merger still took place. Moreover, it was apparent that these discussions occurred within the humanities faculty board and not within Senate (Interview: Executive Manager 1, 2013).

All the respondents made the point that the student representatives had not used any informal means, such as strikes, petitions or boycotts, to influence a decision within Senate. Eight different role players mentioned an incident involving the Working Group Committee; student representatives threatened a “library sit-in” in an attempt to get an agreement to having 24 hour access to library (Interviews: Executive Manager 1, 2013, Executive Manager 3, Executive Manager 5, Student 1-3, 5, 2012). The students were successful, but the Library Working Group Committee made the decision, not the Senate. Therefore, there is some evidence of this indicator within the Senate subcommittees.

#### **4.5.3 The environment in the Senate is sufficiently conducive to give the student representatives an opportunity to influence decisions.**

A cross-section of six respondents in their initial responses said that there were no obvious hindrances that might inhibit the student representatives from influencing any decision taken by the Senate (Interviews: Executive Manager 1, 2, 4, Professor 2, Student 2 and Senior Manager 1, 2012). The students’ ability to influence decisions ultimately came down to an individual’s personality, capabilities and depth of knowledge of the matter not Senate procedures. One executive manager thought that student representatives could be faced with conflicting obligations, the demands of their academic studies and of membership of a Senate



subcommittee. This could undermine their efforts to remain on “top of things” (Interview: Executive Manager 1, 2012).

One student observed:

Barriers, [sighs], and, no, I don't think so. Barriers will just come from depths of knowledge. I don't know if we can blame it on Senate ... if you haven't been equipped enough. Maybe enough induction of sorts is needed. If that could happen [,] that could be great (Student 2, 2012).

Overall, after further probing most of the respondents noted the existence of inhibitive practises which limited student's ability to influence decisions. Others mentioned a wide range of practices and procedures which could undermine the students' ability to influence decisions. They included organisational barriers, such as delays in the issuing of an agenda or the Principal's Circular, the lack of an induction programme and of administrative support, the shortness of a student representative's term on the Senate, the students being a minority constituency and the scheduling of meetings that clash with examinations. One executive manager felt that the practice of allowing individuals of stature to make presentations to the Senate often deterred some members from giving their opinions. This prevented them from influencing decisions (Interview: Executive Manager 3, 2012). One student mentioned that having to submitting questions to the Chair of Senate and Deputy Vice Chancellors 24 hours prior to a meeting could discourage members who wanted to ask questions about an issue not on the agenda (Interview: Student 4, 2012).

#### **4.5.4 Within the Senate a balance of power exists between the student constituency and the other constituencies**

It was evident that all Senate members, students included, were equal in that each member could exercise his/her vote. However, after the researcher had placed the different constituencies on a 5-point scale<sup>23</sup>, which ranged from no/zero influence to all powerful, it was clear that some constituencies did have a greater influence or power to affect decision-

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<sup>23</sup> One represented no/zero influence, two a weak influence, three moderate influence, four a strong influence and five all powerful.

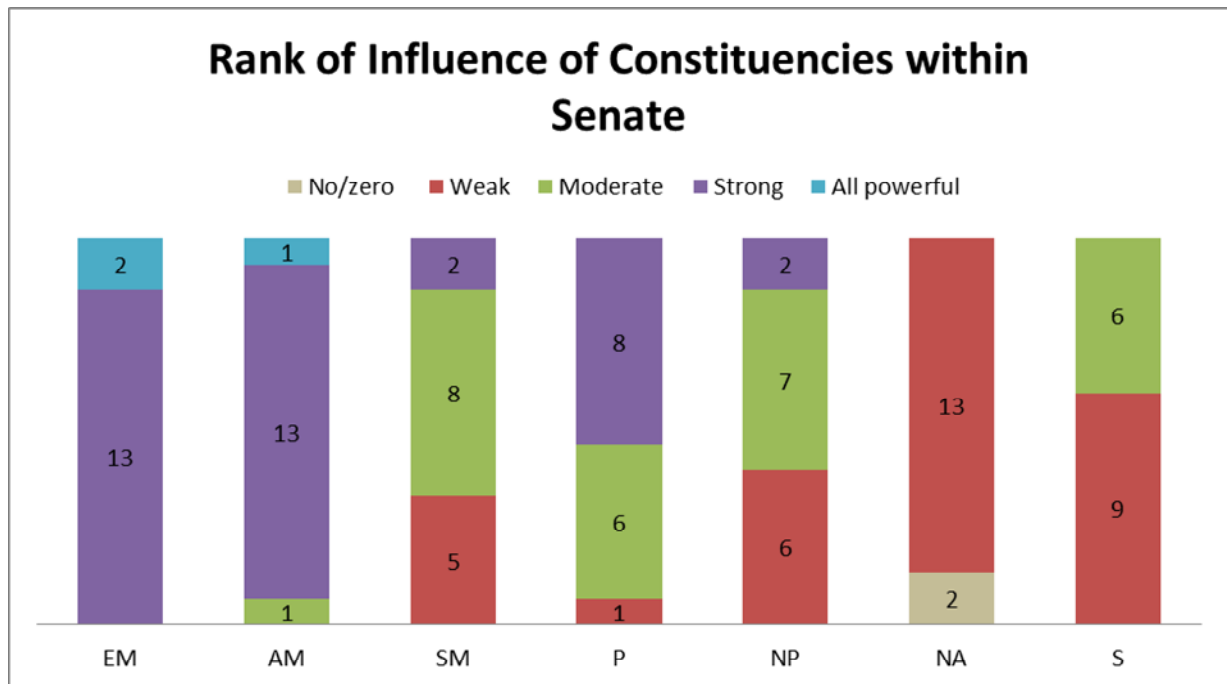
making than others. The response of one executive manager was not included in the final analysis as she/he presented what they thought should be the case, the ideal, not the actual situation (Interview: Executive Manager, 5).

Though most respondents felt that no constituency was all powerful, however, there were three who disagreed (Interviews: Student 2, 5 and Senior Manager 1, 2012). The students said that the executive managers were very powerful because other members were easily swayed by them because they were high up in the UCT hierarchy (Interviews: Student 5, 2, 2012). One student thought that the executive managers could overturn a proposal issued by students (Interview: Student 2, 2012). One senior manager said that he or she believed the management academics were very powerful because of their position in the faculties which allowed them to caucus before presenting the issue in Senate (Interview : Student Manager 1, 2012).

#### **4.5.4.1 Ranking of the different constituencies**

Respondents were asked to rank the power or influence of the different constituencies. Two respondents said that the executive managers were all powerful; the other 13 said this group had a strong influence. One respondent stated that the academic managers were all powerful, 13 said that they had a strong influence, and one said that they had a moderate influence. Two respondents felt that the senior managers had a strong influence; eight said that they had a moderate influence, and five that their influence was weak. Eight respondents said that professors had a strong influence; six said that they had a moderate influence, and one believed that their influence was weak. Two respondents said that non professorial academic staff members had strong influence, seven that their influence was moderate, and six that their influence was weak. 13 out of 15 respondents said that the influence of non-academic staff members was weak; two said that they had nil influence. Nine respondents perceived the students' influence to be weak, while six said that the students had a moderate influence. These findings are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Frequency of responses in ranking influence of constituencies in Senate**



#### Key

EM = Executive Managers; AM = Academic Managers; SM = Senior Managers ; P = Professors; NP = Non-Professorial Academic Staff members; NA = Non Academic Staff Members; S = Students

From the findings is clear that the executive managers and academic managers had a strong influence; professors had moderate to strong influence; senior managers had moderate to weak influence; non- professorial academic staff members had moderate to weak influence; non-academic members had weak influence and students had moderate to weak influence.

A cross-section of five respondents rated the executive manager's influence as strong because they controlled the Senate proceedings (Interviews: Student 1, 6, 3, Executive Manager 3 and Professor 1, 2012). They pointed out that the Vice Chancellor was the Chair of the Senate, who was assisted by the Registrar, directed the Senate proceedings and regulated what could be included on the agenda. In addition, three respondents mentioned that the motions were mostly presented, argued or prepared by the Deputy Vice Chancellors (Interviews: Executive Manager 4, Professor 2 and Student 6, 2012). Moreover, the Deputy

Vice Chancellors had leverage over decisions, because in most cases, they were the Chairs of the sub-committees which brought issues to Senate (Interview: Student 6, 2012).

One executive manager noted that the Registrar's responsibility carrying out the administrative work of the Senate provided him with considerable leverage (Interview: Executive Manager 1, 2013). One academic manager also made reference to the influence of the Vice-Chancellor, because he had the power to modify proposals which were sent to the Senate Executive Committee<sup>24</sup> for approval (Interview: Academic Manager 1, 2012). In addition, one executive manager noted that the Vice-Chancellor had a substantial influence on the decisions of the Senate because of his position as the executive head of UCT (Interview: Executive Manager 1, 2012). One of the professors pointed out that the Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellors hold executive power within the institution university (Interview: Professor 2, 2012).

Various explanations were provided for the strong influence of the academic managers. One of the students and a professor felt that the influence of the academic managers was derived from the fact that they were part of the management of their faculty (Interviews: Professor 1 and Student 6, 2012). This allowed them to caucus other faculty members before escalating a matter to the Senate (Interview: Senior Manager 1, 2012). Academic managers also formed part of the management of the institution, and, therefore, worked closely with the executive managers; which gave them a lot of power in Senate (Interviews: Professor 1 and Student 4, 2012). The deans in particular were very influential and had hierarchical power relations with the academic staff members and also the head of departments, who have been grouped together in this study (Interviews: Academic Manager 1 and Student 1-3, 6, and Professor 1, 2012). One of the students noted that the deans were rarely opposed by other members of their faculty because of their position within the faculty, although, often there were one or two individuals who made objections (Interview: Student 3, 2012). Because non-professorial academic staff were usually nominated by the deans, a student felt that this suggested that "they are under their [, the deans',] arms" (Interview: Student 1, 2012). For these reasons, the

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<sup>24</sup>The Senate Executive Committee is a subcommittee of the Senate which meets regularly to screen the items on the agenda and the proposals to be discussed by Senate.

academic staff on the Senate did not often speak against the deans for fear of “alienating their seniors [,] and the boss kind of vibe” (Interview: Student 2, 2012).

A cross-section of eight respondents reported that the influence of the professors as a bloc was derived from the fact that they were in the majority in the Senate, which made them a strong lobbying group (Interviews: Academic Manager 1-2, Executive Manager 1, 4; Professor 1 and Student 1-3, 2012). Two professors and another student did not agree that the above statement was true. They felt that the professors, as a lobbying group, were seldom organised and consequently voted independently (Interviews: Professor 1-2 and Student 6, 2012). A senior manager and a student observed that academic members of the Senate generally relied on strong intellectual argument and academic reputation as a means to influence the other members (Interviews: Student Manager 1 and Student 4, 2012). The dominant view among respondents was that the professors had a moderate to strong influence; however, one executive manager held the opposite view. He noted that only a few of the professors attended Senate meetings regularly, and so he believed that they had a weak influence (Interview: Executive Manager 1, 2013).

A cross-section of three respondents stated that non-professorial academic members received a low ranking, as a consequence of the following: they were not organised; they formed a minority group and had lower academic standing than the professors (Interviews: Professor 1, Student 3 and Executive Manager 2, 2012).

The moderate to weak influence of the senior managers was linked to the fact that, as a constituency, they did not work in isolation, but with the executive managers (Interviews: Student 4 and Professor 1, 2012). Therefore, in ranking them separately as a constituency it appeared that their influence was lower. In addition, as not all senior managers attended Senate meetings, they were counted as a minority (Interviews: Academic Manager 2, Executive Manager 3, 4 and Senior Manager 1, 2012). A cross-section of three respondents mentioned that while senior managers had influence over the general governance of the institution, they had little influence over academic matters discussed in Senate (Interviews: Student 2, 6 and Executive Manager 2, 2012).

13 respondents attributed the students' low ranking to the fact that they formed a minority in Senate (Interviews: Academic Manager 1, Executive Manager 1, 2, 4, Professor 1-2, Senior Manager 1, Student 1-4, 6, 2012). Three executive managers emphasised that the Senate was a body devoted to academic governance, and, therefore, the issues discussed there were often unrelated to their interests (Interviews: Executive Managers Executive Manager 1-3, 2012). A cross-section of six respondents felt that the students did not know the historical background to issues being discussed to enhance their capacity to impact on the decisions and argue from an informed position (Interviews: Academic Manager 1, Executive Manager 1, 4, Student 2, 4 and Professor 1, 2012). One student mentioned that the divisions which separated student structures were often highly politicised, which limited their ability to impact Senate decisions (Interview: Student 3, 2012). In addition, the students' influence was negated because what was being discussed had far wider ramifications, for example, on university policy, and also affected the other constituencies (Interviews: Executive Manager 2 and Student 1, 2012). One executive manager explained:

I think that the problem is [that] a lot of the things where student[s] make an input have implications that are much wider than student needs (Executive Manager 2, 2012).

The weak influence of non-academic staff members was attributed to the fact that they were a minority in Senate (Interviews: Academic Manager 2, Executive Manager 4 and Student 6, 2012). Some respondents added that non-academic members were not visible, or rather, that their presence was not felt during the decision-making process (Interviews: Student 3, 6 and Senior Management 1, 2012). Furthermore, it was difficult to play a significant role and so influence the Senate, if you were not involved in academic matters (Interviews: Executive Manager 2 and Academic Manager 2, 2012).

It was apparent from the evidence presented above, that there was no balance of power among the constituencies in the Senate. Furthermore, the findings indicate that a Level of Partnership between the students and the powerful role players in Senate had not been reached.

#### **4.6 Absence of evidence of the Levels of Delegated Power and Citizen Control**

Arnstein (1969) indicates that at the Level of Delegated Power, citizens are assigned management positions and responsibilities. It was evident from the findings that control of the Senate proceedings was felt to be mainly in the hands of the executive managers, and not the students. If the Levels of Delegated Power and Citizen Control had been reached, the students should have the majority of seats this could enable them to have dominate decision making power. Not only were the students a minority in Senate, but also on the subcommittees. In addition, students could not veto decisions made by the Senate. The power to veto would be an indicator that the Level of Citizen Control had been attained. This evidence supports the initial assertion made by the researcher that these levels were unattainable in this case.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The results indicate that participation within Senate had moved beyond Informing, and Consultation, but had not exceeded the Level of Placation. At the level of Placation students are able to place issues on the agenda, give their input on any discussion, at will; however, they have limited power and cannot overturn a decision. This is the consequence of the following factors: firstly, their numbers are not significant enough (six out of 342 members) to influence decisions when it comes to a vote; secondly, student membership is transitory, so they do not have sufficient time to gain a good grasp of the fundamentals of most issues; and thirdly, there is no orientation programme to familiarise new members with the operations and purpose of the Senate. At best, therefore, it is left to the astuteness of individual student representatives to make their mark and persuade the different blocs to support their cause. In addition, it was apparent that Arnstein's conception of the Level of Partnership had not been achieved. For there to be partnership between the students and the other constituencies, there needs to be evidence that the students are part of joint decision-making and planning in Senate and the subcommittees. Students do have some form of leverage which they can use to bargain, and the Senate does give students opportunities to influence decisions and form alliances among themselves and with the other constituencies. The

dominate constituencies within Senate where the executive managers, academic managers followed by professors.



## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

### *Introductory note*

The major findings of the study are summarised below;

- i. Student participation in the Senate is at the level of Placation.
- ii. The Senate, which is the main academic decision-making authority at UCT, is dominated by the executive managers, the academic managers and the professors.
- iii. The constituencies represented in Senate experience varying forms of participatory democracy. The executive managers, the professors and academic managers enjoy a greater degree of inclusive, participative democracy than do students and the other constituencies.
- iv. The level of Placation is not consistent with either the principle or the spirit of democratisation found in the White Paper (1997). The White Paper promotes a model of co-operative governance which resembles Arnstein's Partnership Level of participation in decision-making.

In this chapter I discuss three key themes which emerge from my findings. The first theme revolves around the problems associated with student participation in institutional governance being at the Placation Level. The second discusses the principle of democratisation used in the White Paper of (1997) as it relates to the decision-making bodies within universities. The third theme looks at the possible reasons why HEIs such as UCT are likely to retain the status quo and not move towards more inclusive and participatory forms of democracy which include all the university constituencies.

### **5.1 The Problem with student participation taking the form of Placation**

Participation as Placation means that students have very limited influence over the decisions taken in Senate. In the course of researching the topic it became evident that although the student members are taken seriously in Senate because they represent the views of the student body at large, they are not influential. In general, their influence depends on the

extent to which the powerful role players are prepared to concede to their “demands”. Moreover, because the number of student representatives is small, six out of a total membership of 342, they cannot by their small number exert much influence when the Senate takes a vote. The executive managers, the academic managers and the professors dominate decision-making, because they have the numerical advantage or the stature. A restricted form of democracy is practised at UCT where in Senate. All the executive managers, academic managers and professors are members of the UCT Senate, and only six student members represent over 25 000 students (UCT Undergraduate prospectus, 2013:5). The student representatives are therefore a minority in the Senate.

The main finding of this study is that, students influence in key decision-making bodies is weak, validates the findings of earlier studies on related issues. A comparative study of student participation in South Africa universities (UCT included), found that student participation was “largely ineffectual” in representing student interests in institutional governance (Cele, 2002:1). Studies in other countries have also confirmed the limited nature of students’ influence over decisions in HEIs. Wood (1993), in evaluating the impact and influence of students, academic staff and support staff as a group, on decisions made by senior management and board members on the governing bodies at three community colleges in Canada, found that the group had a limited to modest influence on the final decisions of these bodies. Another study, by Menon (2005) in Cyprus, asked 135 students to evaluate, on a scale of one to five, their perceptions of the level of student participation in the university’s main decision-making bodies. Findings from Menon’s study indicate that students regarded their participation in decisions relating to the University’s aims, mission and strategic planning, as being limited (Menon, 2005: 173).

One consequence of the students’ participation in the Senate not exceeding what Arnstein calls Placation, is that in instances where students hold views different from the majority, there is the likelihood that as a small minority they will be outvoted, and consequently silenced. The silencing of students’ viewpoints is due to the skewed representation arising from the Senate’s structure that favours the above mentioned powerful groups. References to the democratisation of HEI governance certainly implies that all stakeholders should participate more fully in the decision-making process of the university that affect them. As a

small minority in the Senate students do not participate as equal partners with other constituencies such as the professoriate. This fundamentally undermines the democratisation of HEIs' governance. Placation does not allow students the same opportunities, as all the other groups, to influence the outcome of decisions taken by the Senate.

Bing and Dye's (1992) work about the various role players' participation in HEI, argues that Placation "is the most dangerous form of tokenism, established by the illusion of shared decision-making when there was only [the] accidental occurrence of opinions on issues" (Bing and Dye, 1992: 16). The frustration and disillusionment expressed by some of the student representatives during the interviews echo what Bing and Dye have found.

## **5.2 Democratisation of decision-making bodies within universities**

One of the guiding principles of the White Paper (1997) is democratisation. The policy document states that the principle of democratisation "requires that governance of the system of higher education and individual institutions should be democratic, representative and participatory and characterised by mutual respect, tolerance and the maintenance of a well-ordered and peaceful community life" (White Paper 1997, 1.19). The policy makers have used the language of stakeholder political theory. This theory suggests that the implementation of broad and inclusive forms democracy, which entails the inclusion of all stakeholder groups in collective decisions, and the use of dialogue to reach consensus in the event of conflict (Morrow, 1998). Stakeholder political theory also argues for equal representation, and the allocation of some power to the various interest groups, as opposed to power remaining under the control of a few groups (Morrow, 1998). Morrow, in relating the theory to university governance, argues that theory implies that the various stakeholder groups are "potentially a legitimate and equal stakeholder in the governance of the university" (Morrow, 1998: 387). In instances where the decision-making procedure is through a vote, this means that each stakeholder must have the same number of votes (Morrow, 1998: 387).

For the University to act in a way that is consistent with representative and participatory forms of democracy outlined in the White Paper, it needs to allow the system to evolve

beyond Placation and restricted forms of democracy, to a broader, inclusive participatory democracy. This notion is also championed by supporters of participatory democratic theory who advocate greater self-governance and the involvement of citizens in those societal institutions which affect their lives (Pateman, 1970). From these theories forms of democracy which are broad, inclusive and participatory can be constructed. These forms posit that all constituencies or stakeholders are equal partners, and should have equal influence on decisions made. In the context of this study this entails students having equal representation with the other constituencies.

To use Arnstein's terminology, this requires moving beyond Informing, Consultation, and Placation to, at least, the Partnership Level. At the Level of Partnership power is redistributed by means of joint decision-making (Arnstein, 1969:221). The sharing of the responsibilities for planning and a decision-making ensures that a balance of power is achieved, as all decisions are negotiated (Arnstein, 1969:221). This is not being practised at UCT which still adopts the traditionalist model. This model includes all the professors within the university based on their academic standing, and "non-professorial academic staff who are heads of departments and other academic units" form the majority in Senate (Hall et al., 2002:39). The literature suggests an alternative to the traditionalist model which is called an elected Senate (Organisational Design and Governance report<sup>25</sup> (ODG, 2000:41). In it all the constituencies, including the Professoriate, are elected representatives. This was the model adopted by the former University of Natal (ODG, 2000:41).

The next section evaluates the benefits of participatory decision-making in universities. At an institutional level, student participation in governance is viewed as a mechanism for providing "checks and balances ...[on] administrators and faculty [academics]", thus ensuring that both groups are held accountable for the decisions they make, and the quality of education received (Love and Miller, 2003: 533). Additionally, participatory decision-making ensures that student concerns are addressed as their input forms part of the outcome (Menon: 2003). This consequently, results in greater cohesion, improved communication and decreased

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<sup>25</sup> See Towards Co-operative Governance a Blue print for management of the University of Cape Town: Report and Recommendations for Council (Version 2): Organisational Design and Governance Stream of the Aims Project.

conflict, for example, student strikes disrupting teaching, as the policies reflect their contributions (Obondo, 2000). In other words participation legitimises decisions made within the university decision-making bodies (Cele, 2002).

The participation of citizens within participatory institutions has the potential of consolidating political democracy within the broader society (Hilmer, 2010). It is of great significance within HEIs which are tasked with the role of “socialisi[ng] of enlightened, responsible and constructively critical citizens” (White Paper, 1997: 1.3). Hence, students can only understand, appreciate and respect democratic practises if they have experienced them in the institutions of higher education.

### **5.3 Maintaining the status quo**

Why is UCT likely to maintain the status quo, whereby the executive managers, the academic managers and also the professors continue to wield the most power in the Senate? An attempt to respond to the above question begins with an assessment of the White Paper document of (1997) and Higher Education Act of (1997) which inform the co-operative governance model.

Firstly, the White Paper together with the Higher Education Act does not prescribe to HEIs what forms of democracy or participation they should implement. The White paper, (1997) which gives a broad outline of the co-operative governance approach states the need for the HEIs to create partnerships and adopt the principle of democratisation in the governance of, but it is a vague document (Cloete and Maasen, 2002:454). The document makes no mention of equal representation, which is implicit in the rhetoric of participatory decision-making. The document gives little detail on how this democratisation is to be achieved, and does not describe what participation will look like in practice. This allows for great latitude in its interpretation, and institutions are free to adopt a minimalist interpretation which is inconsistent with the spirit of democratisation.

Similarly, the Act also gives each institution the right to choose the form of Senate it wishes, within the limits prescribed by its institutional statutes (Hall et al., 2002: 39). The Act “does

not amplify how the interests of both internal and external stakeholders should be reflected in governance and management structures” (ODG report, 2000:39<sup>26</sup>). The University of Cape Town, as mentioned earlier, has adopted a mainly traditionalist model in the selection of the majority of academic members of the Senate. Out of the 342<sup>27</sup> members of Senate, only six (1.75%) are student representatives. Luescher’s (2008:261) study revealed that 150 out of a total of 255 members were professors and 76 were academic managers such as the deans. While this is a restricted form of democracy and participation from the point of view of the students, the university does operate within the confines of the Act which states that the majority of Senate members have to be academic staff (Higher Education Act 1997, 28:4). This is clearly a problem if the University is to increase the level of participation by students in university governance, because the present structure of the Senate prevents them from doing so, because of their disproportionately small numbers in Senate.

Furthermore, Koen et al (2006:63) in writing about South Africa, contend that the “increasing marketization and corporatization of higher education institutions ... [has led] to the concentration of authority in the office of the Vice Chancellor”. This is evidenced by the disproportionate power of the executive managers, the Vice chancellor in particular, who by virtue of his position is also the Chair of Senate and the head of the institution. My research also shows that academic managers, especially the deans, exercise a great deal of influence over the decisions of the Senate. Such power dynamics are not conducive to joint decision-making by all the stakeholders (Koen et al., 2006:63).

University governance systems are heavily influenced by a number of factors, institutional cultural heritage is perhaps the most significant. English language universities in South Africa (and elsewhere) like most HEIs, are hierarchical, and have long “traditions of governance [which] are characterised by an anti-democratic lack of equality, transparency and accountability” (Morrow, 1998: 389). Participation in decision-making is based on academic merit, students are usually regarded as “novices with respect to the academic practice(s) they are trying to learn” and not as equals (Morrow, 1998: 400). Furthermore, the idea of stakeholder participation within an institution such as the university is impractical (Morrow,

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<sup>26</sup> Drawing on Cloete and Bunting (2000).

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.uct.ac.za/about/governance/senate/> as at 1 January 2012.

1998:399), because universities are not “egalitarian institutions in which all voices carry equal weight in collective decisions”. UCT has inherited a traditionalist governance model of the way in which Senate operates. One reason for the restricted student participation in university governance is the assumption that senior academic members, such as professors, are experts at academic practice, and know better what the academy needs. Equal representation in governance structures, including the Senate, would increase the opportunities for students (and other role players) to influence decision-making processes of these structures. This would undermine the current power dynamic in the Senate, and the professors and academic managers’ roles as the guardians of the academic standards of the institution, a role they are not likely to surrender or share with students.

Morrow’s (1998) critique of stakeholder political theory within the context of universities seems to suggest that Placation is the only level possible for students and (other stakeholders and role players) who are not academic staff, or more specifically, senior academics. He offers a number of reasons for this, that universities are specialised institutions and have certain modes of operation that only those who have an extended level of training, such as senior academic members, can understand (Morrow: 1998). In relation to this study the argument implies, that students, who spend only a few years at the university, maybe unable to distinguish between what is good or bad for the university in the short and the long term.

My study also reveals that students also at times are to blame for their limited influence over Senate’s decisions, and their failure to challenge the status quo. This is because in some cases student representatives do not comprehend the issues being discussed, or do not have sufficient time to master the issues before Senate. Hence, as Woods (1993) points out, barriers to effective participation could be directly attributed to the individual representatives’ personal and behavioural traits. Their effectiveness in impacting the decision-making process within the structures of the institutions varies according to the extent to which each individual is able to comprehend the issues and/or robustly engage with them. A lack of interpersonal skills, a relatively limited educational background and experience in governance hinders student participation as equals (Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999).

In addition, Luescher's (2010: 259) investigation into the impact, at UCT, of various governance approaches on student participation and politics, reveals that the current wave of managerialism has significantly affected student politics by making it more "de-politicised" than before. Consequently, students have become less involved in societal and general institutional governance, and more concerned with what they viewed as their major business, namely student affairs (Luescher: 2010). This finding is reiterated by Bergan (2004:16) who states that "the present-day students are to a large extent disconnected at least from institutional governance and perhaps even more from institutional life". The study by Schlesinger and Baldrige (1982) also suggests that students are increasingly becoming more career oriented and less concerned about issues of governance.

All these factors leave the current system of institutional governance unchallenged. With this in mind, it is difficult to foresee greater democratisation of governance in English language HEIs, specifically the Senate, because there is no evidence that the status quo is being destabilised or challenged. Therefore, the level of participation by students is unlikely to reach beyond Placation in the near future.



## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

This chapter presents a summary of the entire thesis, makes a number of concluding remarks and suggests issues for further research.

### **6.1 Overview of the study**

Student participation in institutional governance is generally viewed as being central to the democratisation of higher education institutions. In the South African context this notion is encompassed within the co-operative governance approach which advocates broad participatory forms of democracy in the governance of HEIs. The model is informed by the White Paper of (1997) which prescribes increased stakeholder participation in representative, participatory and democratic forms of governance of HEIs. Hence the central aim of this study was to assess the extent to which students were participating in the Senate, the highest academic decision-making body at the University of Cape Town. The broad motivation was to investigate the extent to which the institution had implemented the co-operative governance model in relation to student participation.

In order to achieve this aim, the study adopted a case study approach which mainly used qualitative research methods, namely, in-depth semi structured interviews, documentary research and observation, to collect data. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation model was adopted as the analytical framework of the study. The conceptualisation of each of the four levels in Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, namely, Informing, Consultation, Placation and Partnership assisted in developing indicators. These indicators informed the development of a semi-structured interview schedule. The questions were mainly open-ended questions with one structured question which measured the respondent's perception on the influence of the different constituencies in decision-making. The sampling method used to select the 16 respondents in the study was purposive stratified sampling. The qualitative data was analysed using Miles and Huberman's approach to data inquiry. The quantitative data was analysed using the computer software package, MS Excel.

The major findings of the study indicate that student participation in the Senate was at the level of Placation. There was an absence of the higher degrees of participation within the category, of Citizen Control. The student representatives being six (6) out of 342 members had very limited power to determine the outcome of any decision made in Senate. The Level of Placation is inconsistent with the principle of democratisation presented in the White Paper (1997). The limitations of this level are that students can be outvoted or silenced on contentious issues by the powerful role players.

The dominate constituencies in Senate were the executive managers, the academic managers and then the professors. These constituencies experienced more inclusive, participatory democracy as they had almost all the seats in the Senate. The students along with the other minority constituencies experienced a restrictive form of democracy. The current power dynamics do not allow for genuine negotiation between the different constituencies to take place in the event of a disagreement.

The discussion centred on the three central themes which emerged from the findings. These included problems related to the situation of having student participation at the Placation level; how the University could effectively translate the principle of democratisation in governance into practice, and the possible reasons for the current status quo in the Senate. The study assessed that the logical consequences, should UCT follow the principle of democratisation promoted by the White Paper, would imply equal representation of the various constituencies in Senate. This notion of democracy is supported by participatory democratic theory and stakeholder political theory. According to Arnstein's model this would entail moving from the Level of Placation to the Partnership Level. At this level through negotiation the responsibilities of decision-making and planning are shared and there is a balance of power.

On the other hand, the reasons which account for the current status quo at the Level of Placation included vagueness of the White Paper which does not prescribe what the concept of participation means in practice. This leaves room for minimalist interpretations. Other factors include the traditional institutional culture of HEIs according to which the right to participate is based on one's academic status. Furthermore, decline of student interest or

desire in challenging the current system. In addition, the idea of stakeholder participation within an institution such as the university is impractical (Morrow, 1998:399), because universities are not “egalitarian institutions in which all voices carry equal weight in collective decisions” as also contributed to perpetuating it.

## **6.2 Issues for further research**

The scope of the study in investigating student representation in the Senate, subcommittees at faculty level was restricted to faculty boards. Subsequent studies can also investigate whether students have representation in the substructures below the faculty boards. Future studies with better funding and a well-equipped research team could widen the scope of analysis to include several case studies, for comparative purposes, at institutional, faculty, departmental and at class levels.

## **6.3 Concluding remarks**

The major objective of the research was to investigate the extent of student participation in institutional governance at the University of Cape Town. In light of the research findings, the study makes a number of remarks. Although one of the central aims of the co-operative governance model which informed the White Paper of 1997 was the principle of democratizing the HEIs, through increased stakeholder participation, including students, the forms of democracy adopted have been minimalist. Students have been included into the key decision-making bodies but not as equal partners. This is because even though policy makers used the rhetoric of participatory democracy, the resultant policies are so vague as to give implementing institutions much latitude to implement them as they see fit sometimes minimally, but yet still remain within the parameters of the legal requirements. It would appear, from the research results, that the status quo within universities such as UCT is unlikely to change in the short and medium term, given the current conditions within which the university operates and the power dynamics at play. However, if universities are to follow the spirit of democratization to the letter, they have to radically rethink the involvement of students in Senate and other decision making bodies linked to institutional governance.

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<http://www.lithgow-schmidt.dk>

<http://uct.ac.za/about/governance/senate>

<http://www.uct.ac.za/about/governance/studentgov/>

<http://www.uct.ac.za/students/src>

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Consent Form

**Title of study:** Student Participation in institutional governance in South African Universities: A case of the University of Cape Town.

**Researcher:** Sithabile Mbambo  
Sociology Department, University of Cape Town  
Private Bag, Rondebosh, 7701  
Telephone number, 0761353193  
Email: [sithabile.mbambo@uct.ac.za](mailto:sithabile.mbambo@uct.ac.za)

**Supervisor:** Dr Jacques de Wet

The practice of student participation in institutional governance has become widespread with a general assumption that it is a prerequisite for democratic governance of Higher Education Institutions. Therefore, I am conducting a qualitative study to investigate the extent to which student representatives participate in the main decision-making body of the University of Cape Town.

I am a Masters student studying in the Department of Sociology, at the University of Cape Town. I am currently undertaking the research in partial fulfilment of my master's degree. The study will be conducted using semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. As per the interview, a number of students involved in the Student Representative Council, administrators and academic members who are involved in decision-making activities within the University will be interviewed. All related documents and meeting minutes collected will be examined and evaluated. The purpose of this letter is to seek your consent to be interviewed. Participation in the study is purely voluntary. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will be recorded. The questions asked will be pertaining to your experiences of and opinions about student involvement in Senate, the main academic decision-making body of the University of Cape Town. Anonymity and confidentiality of the responses will be guaranteed. The interviews will be transcribed personally by the researcher

and your name will not be disclosed in the final research thesis. As a participant you have the right to opt out at any time during the study without penalty and the information provided will be destroyed. Your cooperation and assistance will make this study a success. It is my hope that you would agree to be involved in the study and reply to me as soon as possible in order to arrange the interview at your convenient time. Attached to this is an interviewee consent form. Should you have any further questions please contact me on the details provided above.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Thank you

Sithabile Mbambo

Student number: MBMSIT001

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### **INTERVIEWEE CONSENT FORM**

I hereby consent to participate in a research conducted by Sithabile Mbambo as part of her requirements for the partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Philosophy at the University of Cape Town.

I have read and understood this consent form and I understand that the interview will be recorded; my identity will not be disclosed; the interview recording will be kept and transcribed only by the researcher; my involvement in the study is voluntary and I may opt out as I wish at any time during the study without penalty of any sort and the information provided will be destroyed. In addition the information obtained from the study will be used for academic purposes-only for her masters' thesis.

Interviewee signature

Date .....

Researcher Signature

Date .....

## Appendix B: Interview schedule

<p>1.0 With regard to the key issues discussed within Senate where students adequately informed prior to the meeting about all the items on the agenda? Which methods are usually used?</p> <p>1.1 In your opinion were student representatives adequately provided with the background information and documents of items on the agenda?</p>	
<p>2. Are students only informed or are they also invited to give their views and opinions regarding any issue under discussion?</p> <p>3. Do students give their views and opinions only when invited or are they also free to initiate the process themselves?</p>	
<p>4. Do you think that the views students express influence decisions made within Senate</p>	
<p>5. Are students able to place issues on the agenda to be discussed within Senate?</p> <p>What is the procedure?</p>	
<p>6.0 Do students have voting rights within Senate? Can they vote on all issues?</p> <p>6.1 Could you explain what the Principal Circular is? How frequent do students object to proposals or recommendations made within the Principal Circular?</p>	
<p>7.0 Are there incidences where students have held a different view point from other members of Senate and were able to influence the outcome of a vote on the matter? How was this achieved?</p> <p>7.1 Did the student representatives draw on support from the larger student body in order to create a bargaining situation within Senate? How frequently has this happened?</p> <p>7.2 Have students used boycotts, students' strikes and petitions or any other forms of leverage to influence a decision within Senate? Where they successful?</p>	
<p>8.0 Are there any Senate subcommittees where students excluded? Please explain which of them and why?</p>	

8.1 Are students represented on faculty boards?	
8.2 What are some of the task teams or working groups which have been established to plan and review policies made within Senate? Are students included?	
9.0 Are there any hindrances in terms of decision making procedures within Senate that might inhibit students to effectively influence all decisions within Senate? Please elaborate?	
<p>10. How powerful are each of these constituents in decision making on matters that come to Senate. Please rank them according to a scale one to five. (Consider this question in terms of decision making influence, control of Senate proceedings, nature of decisions made within Senate and lobbying influence)</p> <p>1. No/ Zero Influence    2. Weak Influence    3. Moderate Influence    4. Strong Influence    5. All powerful</p>	

**List of Senate constituencies**

- Executive Managers (Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor and Registrar)
- Academic Managers (Deans, Head of Departments, Academic Office Holders).
- Senior Managers (Executive Managers)
- Professors
- Non-Professorial academic staff members
- Non-academic staff members - Professional Administrative Support and Service (PASS)
- Students